



KONNEAUT LAKE

WM MC MICHAEL



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KONNEAUTT LAKE:

A STORY OF EARLY TIMES IN NORTH-WESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA.

BY

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PREFACE.

KONNEAUTT LAKE has many important elements of truth and reality. It gives accurate descriptions of natural scenery; it gives a true picture of society in the early times; its representations of personal character are drawn largely from real life, and very many of its incidents have a basis of fact. The book has specific aims: It is designed to commemorate a past age; it is designed to promote a love for country life, including a love for rural employments, as well as a love for rural scenes and pleasures; it is designed to illustrate the domestic and social virtues; it is, also, designed to show that, while no men or women escape suffering and sorrow, the virtuous, the benevolent, the noble, cannot fail to secure, even in the present world, a measure of true happiness.

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KONNEAUTT LAKE.

CHAPTER I.

A LOOK AT KONNEAUTT LAKE.

WEARIED by a pretty long walk in a warm October day, John Branley advanced slowly; but, reaching a slight eminence in the road, he was pleasantly surprised. He had, for the first time in his life, a glimpse of Konneautt Lake. He knew that he was near the end of his journey; he knew that he was near a fresh and interesting scene; and he now walked with a lighter and quicker step. Presently he ascended another slight elevation, and beheld a considerable area of water. The lake appeared as a brilliant gem with a beautiful setting of green. As the broken and detached clouds floated over, producing, alternately, flitting shadows and bursts of sunshine, the water varied its color, often changing its blue to a darker or lighter shade, and sometimes gleaming with a silvery brightness. The background presented a vast evergreen forest.

John Branley had just risen to manhood. He was an aspiring youth. Learning was the prize which he eagerly sought. Beyond the attainment of a good education he had no definite object. He had attended the academy and made excellent progress. But he was now compelled to earn some money, in order to sustain himself at school and make further acquisitions. Hearing that a teacher was wanted at Konneautt Lake, he resolved to

visit that place, and he was now about to present himself to the people of Evansburgh and vicinity and offer his services.

Evansburgh was a small village, situated at the southern point of Konneautt Lake. John Branley entered the little town, met a man on the street, and inquired for Squire Bluffton's residence. The squire proved to be a gentleman; spoke pleasantly and kindly to the young stranger, learned his business, and invited him to stay for tea. Branley, feeling hungry as well as tired, gladly accepted the squire's hospitality. Meanwhile he learned that the school committee would be called together on Monday, and that a teacher would be engaged for the winter term.

Refreshed by a short rest and a cup of tea, John Branley walked out, late in the afternoon, to see the lake and the surrounding country. The clouds had dissolved or floated away, and the winds had folded their wings and fallen asleep. He found an elevated, grassy spot, and stood quite enraptured. A beautiful scene was before him, — a lake as smooth as glass, three or four miles in length and a mile or more in breadth, the eastern shore exhibiting a background of high, rolling land, farms, and intervening groves, the western shore presenting what seemed to be an unbroken evergreen forest. Beyond the water, northward, several farms, with the usual houses, orchards, and meadows, were visible.

"Charming! charming!" said Branley to himself. "But am I not in the presence of a great solitude?" Not a craft could be seen on the lake; not a human being could be seen anywhere on its shores. He thought that the lake had a very lonely aspect. He felt, too, that the great, dark, silent forest was somewhat gloomy and forbidding.

The young man left his first position, followed the street

or highway, the lake being on the left hand, descended into low ground, crossed the outlet on a bridge, ascended an isolated hill, which was occupied by a hotel, a store, a barn, and various outhouses, then paused and took another general survey. Westward lay the larger part of the village, comprising the "meeting-house," the school-house, and fifteen or twenty other buildings, great and small; southward there was a great pine and hemlock forest, the limits of which could not be seen. Eastward there was low, marshy ground, and what seemed to be a dense and interminable thicket. The highway, as far as it could be seen, followed the bank of the lake. Facing the water, he saw nearly the whole of the western shore; and he observed two dwelling-houses which had been previously hidden from view. One of these houses stood a few hundred yards from the village, and seemed to be connected with a few acres of cultivated ground. The other house was much more remote, and appeared to be closely embraced by the great forest. "Those houses," thought Branley, "are occupied by hunters and fishermen. That distant place is romantic indeed, but how secluded and lonely it seems to be! I could not choose it for my home."

The youth turned to look at the eastern shore, but much of it was concealed by a projecting strip of land. However, he did not look in vain for attractive scenery. A beautiful bay, nearly a mile in breadth, the shore forming more than a semicircle, presented itself. Calmly the blue water reposed in its ancient bed. Not a zephyr rippled its surface; not a fish or water-fowl caused the least visible motion. The water slept, and the sunbeams slept on its bosom. The shore, especially near the centre of the semicircle, exhibited many beauties. First, there was a gravelly beach; then there was a broad fringe of ever-green trees, intermixed with other trees still wearing their

summer robes ; then, on a high plateau, there was a range of beautiful fields ; then, on ground farther back, and still more elevated, there was a dwelling-house, large, painted and showy, standing in close connection with a large barn and an extensive orchard. "That place," thought Branley, "is beautiful as well as romantic. I believe I could live there, and spend my time quite pleasantly, — farming, fishing, and hunting."

John Branley returned to the western part of the town, and then resolved to take a walk in another direction. He observed a common which extended northward along the shore of the lake. He also noticed an inviting path which wound among clumps of elder bushes. He followed the path until he reached an open space, where he had a fine view of the water, and where he found a smooth log which supplied a seat. He sat down, gazed at the water and the surrounding landscape, and mused, thinking, now and then, about his prospective school. Meanwhile the sun was sinking behind the great forest ; tall pines threw their shadows upon the water, and the shadows were extending farther and farther. Branley watched the shadows and continued to muse.

At length the young man's attention was caught by a low murmur. He turned his head, looked, and listened. The murmuring sounds came nigher, and, presently, he espied, through an opening in the bushes, a young girl, who tripped along lightly and gayly, looked about carelessly, and sung, or rather hummed, a little song, — possibly the words and music of a sacred hymn. She passed through the open space, and so he had a near and full view of the maiden. She appeared to be sixteen or seventeen years old ; her height was about ordinary ; her form was slender and graceful ; her face was angular rather than oval ; her features were both delicate and intellectual, and her eyes were large and lustrous, consti-

tuting, perhaps, her chief attraction. A bonnet was carried in her hand, and her uncovered head exhibited waves of dark, beautiful hair. Her feet and ankles were bare, but were white and pretty. The youth was prepared by his poetic temperament, and the fresh, interesting scenery — perhaps by the profound reverie in which he had been lost — for a romantic adventure. "A goddess from the wood or a naiad from the water!" Branley said or thought, as the young, pretty creature passed before his eyes. He was strongly reminded of Thomson's lines :

"Beauty
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,
But is, when unadorned, adorned the most."

The girl appeared to be startled by the sight of a stranger; but she seemed — so Branley thought — to recognize him as the expected applicant for the village school, and to welcome him with a pleasant smile.

The young maiden disappeared among the bushes; but the young man continued to occupy his seat. He was again lost in a reverie. However, he did not ponder the great uncertain future; he had scarcely a thought in respect to his school; he mused about the vision which had come and gone. He sat and thought for fifteen or twenty minutes; but, now and then, he glanced along a vista in the bushes, and listened for the soft, gentle humming of a remarkably sweet voice. At length he heard, not the soft music, but the tinkling of a bell. A small herd of cattle soon appeared. The girl followed, carrying her bonnet in one hand and a rod in the other. Her face was flushed, apparently with exercise; her step was light and graceful; her countenance, erect figure, and elastic walk evinced the possession of good health, and even showed, as the young man thought, a spirit of independence and

self-reliance. She did not permit Mr. Branley to hear the tones of her voice; but she glanced towards the youth, returned his bow with a slight nod, and smiled again. She passed on, driving the cattle, and was soon lost from his view. The image of the girl remained in his heart.

Love is blind, according to an old proverb. Yet the tender passion is excited by something that is seen, something that is real, or, at least, apparent; and, happily, almost every young woman has qualities which may render her agreeable to some young man. It need not be supposed that the girl who passed before the eyes of young Branley, and made a deep impression on his mind, was a perfect beauty, or, in any respect, a perfect being. She simply had something which attracted special notice and won admiration. When love is enthroned it may be blind enough, overlooking personal faults and even mental and moral obliquities; and yet, is not love tolerant rather than blind? A man or a woman may see blemishes in the face and person of a loved one, and not regard them. A man or a woman may see much imperfection in the temper and conduct of a loved one, and willingly risk a union "for better or for worse." Is it not well — even divinely ordered — that love is blind, or, at any rate, tolerant? If love were not blind or tolerant how could it long exist? And if love did not exist, how could mankind endure life?

The young man observed that the sun had set. He abandoned his seat, returned to Squire Bluffton's, and engaged temporary lodging.

CHAPTER II.

A SUNDAY AT KONNEAUTT LAKE.

NEXT day was Sabbath, and Mr. Branley went to church with Squire Bluffton and his family. The young stranger took a special view of the church edifice, then known as the "meeting-house." It stood on a common, about seventy-five yards from the bank of the lake, amidst clusters of low bushes. It was a large, heavy structure, built of hewn logs and covered with shingles. It had three large doors, — one in each end, and one in the side, opposite the pulpit. The external aspect of the building was unattractive. The interior was still less pleasing. The pulpit, standing at the side, was large and rough. A few seats, and a few only, had backs, the seats in general being benches or boards laid upon blocks and trestles. Old people, entering the house, and thinking about their bodily comfort, were accustomed to look for a seat next the wall, or a seat provided with a back.

It happened that this was a "communion Sabbath." The congregation was very large. The population of the country was sparse at the time, but people came ten, fifteen, and twenty miles, and the large house could scarcely hold the assembled multitude. The minister arrived and entered the pulpit. He was somewhat low in stature; he had broad shoulders, and he was, apparently, very robust. His face was rather coarse, but it was strongly marked, evincing talent, energy, and an unconquerable will. His whole appearance was decidedly impressive.

The minister rose, and, according to custom, began the services by an invocation. In a few words, devoutly and

solemnly uttered, he invoked the presence and aid of the Almighty Father. He then announced a psalm. It was the twenty-third psalm of the old version, — a psalm that had been sung by saints and martyrs in preceding ages, — a psalm that will probably be sung till the end of time. The minister read the first verse :

“The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want,
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green : He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.”

“What a powerful voice ! What deep, solemn tones ! What pathos !” Such were Branley’s unheard ejaculations. The minister came to the last verse, reading the first two lines with strong emphasis, and the other two with a softened and tremulous voice :

“Goodness and mercy all my life
Shall surely follow me ;
And in God’s house forever more
My dwelling-place shall be.”

The psalm was familiar to almost every person, yet it was heard as if wholly new, — as if something of the freshest, as well as deepest interest. An elderly man, tall and slender, arose in front of the pulpit, and led the singing. His voice was remarkably soft and melodious, and seemed to be perfectly adapted to a good old air of Scotia. A young man arose at the same time, and stood beside the other. His face and person were noble, almost majestic, and his voice was strong and musical. The whole congregation joined, and there was a great volume of sound. The people, as a whole, evidently sung with the spirit and with the understanding. Deep emotion was apparent. As they sung, “My soul He doth restore again,” tears ran down many cheeks. As they sung,

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I fear no ill," many voices trembled. And as the great congregation sung, "And my cup overflows," the music was like the "sound of many waters," and seemed to be an outburst of gratitude and joy. The psalm, earnestly read and devoutly sung, prepared the people for the other parts of worship.

The minister read the last chapter in the Bible. Then he offered a prayer which was marked by solemnity and earnestness. Another psalm was read and sung. Then the minister arose and announced his text. It was this: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Mr. John Branley became deeply interested in the services. He was greatly moved by the hearty singing of the old psalms. He listened earnestly to the words read by the minister. And now he carefully noted the text. But the youth had thoughts and inquiries like these: "The text is highly metaphorical. It is beautiful and interesting. It is full of tender persuasion. It has implied promises of the most precious kind. Will the text suit the preacher, or the preacher suit the text? Will the kind words harmonize with the stern face? Can those invitations be given, and those promises stated, in the thunder-tones of his voice? If that man should proclaim the law, the whole world might fear and quake. But, if he should attempt to publish the glad tidings, would he be able to use the 'still, small voice,' — the tones that would melt hearts and win them to Christ?" The young man sat and listened. Very soon he forgot or disregarded the preacher's peculiarities, — the coarse features, the severe expression, the thunder-tones. Mr. Branley was not a short-hand writer, but, having an excellent memory,

he was able to reproduce, in after-time, the following sketch of the sermon :

The text is figurative in its language ; but it contains truth of the highest importance. The text assumes that mankind are "athirst," — that is, to speak without figure, are in a state of spiritual destitution and suffering ; are painfully conscious of their true condition, and are anxiously seeking relief. But it is a fact — a fact revealed to us every day — that many who are consciously athirst, and who suffer intensely, do not look for "living water." Many seek earthly streams, — turbid streams of sensual gratification, or streams supplied by art and literature, wealth and power. Some of these streams are poisonous and deadly ; and none of them can allay the thirst of an immortal soul. The prophet expostulates with those who seek relief where no relief can be found, — who "hew out for themselves cisterns, — broken cisterns that can hold no water." Again : "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" However, there are, at all times, some who seek the water of life. These have been taught by experience, or by the Divine Word, or by the Spirit, or by all, that the streams of earth cannot quench their thirst. Sensible that they are wandering over a great desert, not an oasis in sight, not a tree or rock to shelter their heads from the fierce rays of the sun, no spring or well to supply water, nothing in all the earth to allay their terrible thirst, they cry out for the Rock that can afford both water and shade. Are not my hearers athirst, conscious of spiritual want and suffering and anxious to obtain relief?

My friends, there is "living water." There is a "river of life." There are "wells of salvation." "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." The living water can satisfy man, — can allay his

thirst — can preserve his life — can renew his youth — can give him immortality. The living water is just what the thirsty soul needs and must obtain. It is “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” it is “justification unto life;” it is “holiness, without which no one can see the Lord;” it is peace that “flows like a river;” it is hope that is “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” The living water does not belong to the desert. The wells of salvation are not dug in the sands of the earth. The river of life flows on a higher plain than the plain of this world. Yet man, traveling over the desert, thirsting and fainting, yea, ready to perish, can certainly and quickly find the living water. He need not seek the distant oasis to find a well. He need not struggle on painfully towards a distant valley to find a flowing river. No; he can find the living water just where he may happen to be. He can find it at any moment. Let the traveler, as he sinks on the burning sand, look up, — not back or forward, to the right or to the left, — and he will see a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb.” He can reach it at once, drink and live. In all ages, many thirsty ones, passing over the desert, have found the water of life. “They all drank of the Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”

Has not the thirsty soul many and great encouragements? The wells of salvation are ready for use. The river of life is ever flowing; pure, clear, abundant, all-sufficient are its waters. All thirsty ones may partake. All are invited, nay, entreated, to come to the waters, to drink and live. Who is showing to man the terrible nature of his thirst? Who is opening his eyes that he may see the water which can refresh and save him? Who is saying, with more than human tones, or eloquence, or tenderness, “Come, come to the living water”? The

Holy Spirit. "And the Spirit says, Come." Who is she that walks so lightly and swiftly over the desert, her person invested in a glorious robe, — a robe made white in the blood of the Lamb, — love and pity wonderfully blended in the expression of her face, her eyes fixed on the fainting traveler, one hand reaching forward towards the sufferer, the other pointing towards the throne whence the river flows, while, with tones unspeakably tender and importunate, she says, "Come, come to the living water"? Who? The bride, the Lamb's wife. "And the bride says, Come." Prophets, apostles, martyrs, by their recorded faith and triumph in death, say, Come. All who hear and appreciate the Gospel — all who partake of the living water — should say, do say, Come. No price is to be paid for the water, for Christ has purchased it with His blood, and offers it as a gift. "Ho! every one that thirsts, come to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

The sermon closed. The effect was very great. Perhaps no one was more deeply impressed than the young stranger. Probably not one of the great congregation ever forgot that sermon. Probably no one ever forgot the appearance and manner of the preacher. Tears flowed down his rugged cheeks. His voice, at times, assumed a wonderful tenderness and pathos. With overflowing compassion, with intense earnestness, expressed in his voice and manner, he repeated, "Come, come; come, ye who are athirst and dying, take of the waters freely, and live for ever."

The Lord's Supper was administered in the customary way. There were about one hundred communicants. The minister announced that there would be service in the afternoon, closed the exercises, and dismissed the congregation.

According to the custom then prevailing, there was a long interval. The people left the house, walked about among the shrubbery, ate their biscuits, and perhaps made a visit to the spring at the base of the hill.

John Branley left the house ; and, being a stranger, he walked about alone. He saw no person whom he knew. And, having thought awhile about the sermon, he began to think about the maiden whom he had seen the previous day. Perhaps he was anxious to see her again. He looked at one group of young ladies, and then at another, and at maidens who happened to be standing or walking apart ; but he made no pleasant discovery. "She must be here," the young man thought ; "but she may be disguised in her Sunday dress." He continued his search, looking for a face that had left a very distinct image in his memory. At length, he noticed four or five nicely-appareled girls, walking in company towards the bank of the lake, and apparently engaged in lively conversation. He could not see their faces ; but he fancied that one of them had the neat, graceful form, and the light, easy step, which appeared in Saturday's vision. He followed this attractive group, descended a hill, approached the beach, and found a beautiful spring, the water lying in a gravelly basin, and shaded by a tree and several shrubs. Many persons were refreshing themselves with draughts of the pure, cool water. A young lady was serving her companions. She filled a pewter cup and passed it around, till all had partaken and said they had enough. She filled the cup once more, and turned around, apparently to look for a thirsty new-comer. Branley stood before her. There was mutual recognition. Blushes instantly suffused the maiden's cheeks. The youth could not see what his face exhibited ; but he was aware that a strange sensation thrilled his nerves. The girl presented the cup, and said, modestly, "Will you have a drink, sir?" He replied,

courteously, "Yes, if the ladies have been served." He took the cup from her gloved hand, drank the cool water, declared it was most excellent, and returned the cup with a bow and with thanks. Meanwhile the young man made some observations. The girl, he observed, wore a somewhat stylish bonnet, a neat but rather plain dress, a white embroidered cape, white stockings, and morocco shoes. No doubt she was regarded, at the time, as a well-dressed young woman; and, while remembering Thomson's lines, he could not perceive that a little ornament was any damage to her beauty. He still thought that she had a very graceful form and a very beautiful face,—indeed, the most intellectual, the brightest, and the sweetest face that he had ever seen. Having stolen three or four glances at the fair, blushing creature, Mr. Branley walked up the bank. Flora Calvert—that was the girl's name—whispered to her companions, "That gentleman is an applicant for our school, and I believe he is a very nice young man."

CHAPTER III.

A SCHOOL-MEETING.

AT ten o'clock on Monday the school committee met. This occurred many years prior to the adoption of the common-school system, now so generally established in the States. And it probably happened near the beginning of what may be called a "transition period." New England people began to settle in the region, and to exert a modifying influence upon society. School committees, with certain functions, began to be appointed, especially in towns and villages. New ideas in regard to the

authority of teachers, and the proper measures of discipline, began to spread. New branches of study began to be introduced into the schools. New school-books began to supersede the old ones, and teachers of American birth began to supplant the teachers of Irish birth.

The committee organized and proceeded to business. Squire Bluffton filled the position of chairman. Mr. Bayne acted as secretary. The committee was large, comprising, indeed, all the citizens who wished to attend the meeting and share in its proceedings, and might have been called a "committee of the whole." Several States of the Union, and several nationalities, were represented in this important body. Two or three of the members had come from New England, and, at the time, were known as Yankees. These members assumed the air of men who were educated, and who knew something. Two or three were natives of the Green Isle, and these men, learned or not, certainly had opinions of their own. One was a Dutchman, who had not much learning, but almost equalled the Irishmen in perverseness and obstinacy. The majority were native Pennsylvanians, who had been brought up in the woods, and received their education in "log colleges." Nearly all classes, trades, and professions were represented in the committee. It contained a physician, a tanner, a blacksmith, a store-keeper, two or three carpenters, and a number of farmers, besides two or three "private gentlemen," who were not known to have any profession or business.

The committee naturally resolved itself into sub-committees, in accordance with the learning and taste of the members respectively. Mr. Carter was proficient in arithmetic, having passed beyond the Cube Root, or, as some of his admiring friends declared, gone "through and through," while but few of the members had advanced beyond the Double Rule of Three. This member ex-

amined Mr. Branley in the science of numbers. Dr. Marsden had studied grammar for several months, and knew everything in relation to parts of speech, gender and case, mood and tense. This member examined Mr. Branley in the science of language. Mr. Bayne excelled in penmanship, and he scrutinized the chirography of the applicant. Mr. Flint, the blacksmith, was famous as an orator, and was supposed to be profoundly versed in rhetoric as a science; but, as rhetoric was not taught in common schools, there was no call for a display of his gifts and knowledge. However, he listened to Mr. Branley's reading; and, while omitting all direct criticism, gave some valuable hints about inflection and emphasis. Mr. Branley passed the ordeal with ease; and his qualifications as a teacher were unanimously approved, although Mr. Bayne remarked that his penmanship was a little faulty. Branley had not feared the examination, but he really feared a matter which he knew would follow.

"We must now fix the terms," said the chairman.

"I move," said Mr. Flint, "that we pay the teacher so much per month, and not so much per scholar."

This proposed an innovation. According to the old custom, a person who desired a school stated his terms on paper, agreeing to teach for a certain sum per scholar, and carried his paper around among the people. But Evansburgh had a school committee, and the committee was ready to make changes or experiments. Mr. Flint's motion was seconded; and it passed, almost without discussion, and almost unanimously. The vote was followed by silence for two or three minutes; but all, no doubt, were engaged in thought. At length, the chairman, looking pleasantly at the young man, propounded a question:

"Mr. Branley, what wages do you think we should give you?"

"I think I should have twenty dollars a month, besides boarding," he modestly replied.

"Twenty dollars a month!" several persons repeated, with much apparent surprise. All were silent again. Some of the members looked very sullen — almost angry. Branley felt very uncomfortable. The silence was broken by the chairman.

"In my opinion," he remarked, "a young man who is qualified to teach a school, and, especially, one so large and advanced as ours, should have twenty dollars a month."

The doctor seemed to agree with the chairman; but the faces of others expressed very strong dissent. There was another pause in the business.

"I move," said Mr. Flint, breaking the silence this time, "that the salary be fifteen dollars a month and boarding."

The motion was not seconded; some, perhaps, regarding the amount too high, and others, perhaps, regarding it too low.

"I move," said Bradlock, one of the wise men from the East, "that the salary be twelve dollars a month."

This motion was promptly seconded by Mr. McClelland, one of the farmers. Bradlock felt encouraged, rose and made a speech.

"A young man cannot earn much in the winter," he said. "If he earns his bread he does pretty well. I wish my boys could earn theirs. Then the times are hard. Money is scarce; for my part I get none. How can we pay more than twelve dollars a month? Our offer is really good. We propose to give Mr. Branley twelve dollars a month and board him for nothing. Twenty dollars, indeed! Why, that is enough for the president of a college or the governor of a State."

It may be presumed that Bradlock, whether he knew

much or little about others, knew something about himself and his affairs; and, no doubt, he stated one fact: he had no money — none for himself, and none for the teacher. But another and more significant fact he failed to mention: he never earned any money. Next to the man who sat at the table and wielded a pen, he was regarded as the chief sluggard and drone of the community. He was quite unwilling to work. It was generally thought that he was too lazy to steal; and he was not smart enough to trade, or speculate, or cheat anybody. So the poor man felt utterly helpless, and looked around for pity. Bradlock's character gave no weight to his opinions; but as he had come from the East, and was supposed to be acquainted with educational matters, his speech made some impression. The Yankee was followed by the Dutchman, using his bad English.

"I tinks," he said, "as how twelve tollars be plenty."

The Dutchman was followed by an Irishman, using his broad pronunciation and his mannerism.

"I sell my rye at fifty cents a bushel, so I do, and I can't afford to pay high wages to a tacher. Last winter I paid just eight dollars a month to my thrasher, so I did; and thrashing is much harder work than taching, so it is. Mr. Branley should be well satisfied with twelve dollars a month, so he should."

Mr. Bayne remarked, without rising: "We should give better wages. We should encourage young men to prepare themselves for teaching. If we give poor wages we shall have poor teachers and poor schools."

Mr. Bayne's words were sensible and weighty. Unfortunately, he was a man who seldom paid a debt, and always failed to pay the minister and the school-master; consequently, his words had no effect. No reply was made to the secretary.

The chairman stated the motion. The vote was taken.

Five or six voted in the affirmative ; two voted in the negative. Several remained silent. So the committee decided that the teacher should receive twelve dollars a month, with gratuitous board and lodging among the employers.

Branley was surprised ; he was also indignant. His first impulse was to leave the house and the neighborhood. "Have I struggled so hard and so long to qualify myself for teaching, and yet can get only twelve dollars a month? How little these men sympathize with a youth who is aspiring to be a scholar, and is anxious to do something in the world!" However, the young man said nothing aloud, except this : "You offer very low wages, while I am anxious to earn money and complete my education." He had further reflections : "Schools needing teachers are few ; wages are really low ; perhaps I could not get another school ; perhaps I could not get better wages anywhere ; I must earn some money ; it would be better for me to do a little than to do nothing ; shall I accept or refuse this offer?"

The members of the committee saw that the young man felt a sore disappointment, and that he was hesitating in regard to his acceptance or refusal of the offered salary. The chairman uttered a few words, expressive of sympathy for the youth and approval of his aspirations and efforts. Then the doctor rose, and, addressing Mr. Branley, made a somewhat formal speech.

"My young friend, you have had no experience as a teacher, and, therefore, should not expect high wages at present. When you have proved your qualifications, or established a character, you will do much better. Let me assure you that industry, care, and time will enable you to surmount all difficulties, and to achieve any measure of success. Perhaps, in the course of time, you will be a professor in a renowned college, and receive a thousand dollars per annum or more."

The doctor's words were soothing. The youth's exasperation passed away rapidly. The doctor's words were encouraging and stimulating. And Mr. Branley said, "I accept the wages."

The majority of the committee looked as if they were entirely satisfied with themselves, their teacher, and everything. Yet an unexpected trouble presented itself. A member, rising up suddenly, spoke as follows :

"We must say something about the government of the school. Our school, you know, is very large. Many big boys and girls will be scholars. Our teacher must be stern. He must use the rod. He must really be master."

He sat down, and another member, rising, observed,

"I have also a word to say. Let there be no partiality in the school. If the boys misbehave, let them be punished. If the girls misbehave, let them also suffer. When Mr. Colburn's son, who struts about in fine clothes, and Mr. Sheddan's son, who must go to school in rags, misbehave, let one be chastised as well as the other."

Bradlock turned on his seat, and, looking directly at Mr. Branley, said, in a firm tone,

"I wish you to know, once for all, that I do not allow my children to be whipped. No man or woman shall ever apply a rod to my child's back. Remember, sir."

The chairman looked rather disconcerted. Some of the members exhibited signs of strong displeasure. Mr. Branley came very near saying, "Gentlemen, I throw up the school. I cannot please you, and I will not waste my life and energies in attempting impracticable things. Teach your own children, and govern them as you please." However, he said nothing ; and, presently, the chairman remarked,

"Friends, we have entrusted the school to Mr. Branley, and we should allow him to govern it according to

his own judgment. If we prescribe particular rules for his guidance, or continually interfere with his management, — especially if every man's notions must be put into practice, — there can be no school at all. New notions are coming pretty fast just now. But let new things come from any quarter, even from the East, we must look at them awhile before we adopt them. Of course," continued the chairman, "the parent who cannot entrust his children to Mr Branley, has liberty to keep them away. Perhaps Mr. Bradlock can show us all, by his example and success at home, what teaching and governing ought to be."

These remarks appeared to be generally approved. They silenced Bradlock. They calmed Mr. Branley's mind; and he was soon capable of serious reflection. He thought again about his necessities. Besides, to state a fact, he remembered a face — young, innocent, rosy, bright, — a face which he had seen on Saturday and on the Sabbath, and which he very much wished to see again. And he felt that if he should give way to passion, seize his hat, retire from the house, and hurry away from the neighborhood, he would see that face no more. So he did not recall his engagement: he resolved to risk whatever should come, — in the school or out of it.

The committee now hastily resolved, first, that the school term should be five months, and not three months; secondly, that the school should commence the first Monday in November; and, thirdly, that Mr. Branley should circulate a paper, stating that the employers agreed to pay him twelve dollars a month, and that each employer should pay in proportion to the number of scholars annexed to his name.

Mr. Branley modestly suggested that the committee, having fixed the salary, should also raise it. Two or three of the members said that Mr. Branley's suggestion

was reasonable ; and, while they proposed no change in the action of the committee, they offered to aid him in circulating the paper. The majority said nothing, and, of course, offered nothing. The committee, having finished its business, adjourned *sine die*.

As Mr. Branley was retiring, Bradlock approached and whispered, "I wish you to know, sir, that my house is very small, having only one chamber below and a little garret above. Our beds are crowded together. As we keep no *keow*, we have no milk and butter ; and bread and meat are not plenty. We are very poor, and you hadn't ought to board with us. You can find other places." Branley made no reply. Of course he felt the profoundest contempt for the man.

Mr. Branley, aided by a few persons, called upon the citizens of the district and presented his paper. They signed cheerfully and promptly, and he soon completed his preparatory work.

While walking homeward, Mr. Branley had, as a matter of course, many thoughts and reflections. He thought that he had learned something. "I have learned something about human nature," he said to himself. "I have learned that some men are honorable and generous, while others are unspeakably selfish and mean. I have also learned that some people live without a purpose, and almost without exertion of any kind." Besides, the young man thought that he had accomplished something. He said to himself many times, "I have found a school, and, possibly, a sweetheart."

CHAPTER IV.

A SCHOOL.

THE morning of the first Monday in November was auspicious. There was no storm. There was not a visible cloud. Indian summer had come, and the golden sunshine made all the world golden. People who happened to be abroad were cheerful and happy. And Mr. John Branley was certainly not dejected and miserable. He enjoyed the beautiful weather. Besides, he experienced a new and pleasant excitement. He was about to engage in important business, and had a fair prospect of success. He was conscious that his aims were high and worthy. He had not a thought concerning his low wages; he was thinking now about leading young folks along the flowery paths of science, and of achieving for himself a high and lasting reputation as a teacher. O blessed time of youth! when failure and mortification are so soon forgotten; when wounds so readily heal; when hope springs afresh in the bosom; and when new, vigorous efforts can be made to accomplish the purposes of life!

John Branley walked towards the school-house. The building stood on a common, near the church. It was a much better house than the ordinary houses of the country. Like the church edifice, it was built of hewn timber and covered with shingles. It had peculiarities which made it famous. It had glass windows; it was provided with a few separate desks, and it was heated with a stove. The house was exactly square, and it was large enough to accommodate sixty or seventy scholars. Mr. Branley's walk was short that morning. Yet, short as it was, he

had time for a considerable number of mental inquiries. Among the number were these: "Will my school be large? Will it be pleasant? Will my scholars be studious, mannerly, and easily governed? And, *Will she be one?*" The young man had not made a single inquiry in regard to the girl who had interested him so deeply. He had not even learned her name. He had seen her only on two occasions. He had spoken to her only once. Yet he felt that he knew her perfectly. The large, brilliant eyes, the nicely-sculptured features, the calm expression, the sweet, unaffected smile, the manifest refinement and delicacy, were a demonstration to him that the girl was intellectual, pure, and amiable, or all that a woman could be. His actual and only inquiry, therefore, was this: "Will she be a scholar?"

As Mr. Branley approached the school-house, he saw fifteen or twenty boys engaged in play on the common. Very few of the boys appeared to notice him; and only two or three bowed and said, "Good-morning, sir." The play and the noise continued. "These children are somewhat rude," the teacher said to himself. He entered the house, and observed fifteen or twenty scholars, some of them sitting, others frisking about, all, or nearly all, talking and laughing. "I shall have a serious task," was the young man's reflection. Meanwhile children and young people were coming from all quarters. Presently, Mr. Branley stepped to the door, and said, in a pleasant way, "Boys, come in; the school hour has arrived." The boys threw down their bats and entered the house. The teacher then requested the scholars to take seats. He had a pleasant surprise. They obeyed instantly; bustle and confusion ceased; order and silence reigned. "These children and young people," he thought, "have been at school before; they have certainly had some good training." The teacher, standing in the centre of the house,

took a general survey of his school. He was pleased. He saw fifty or sixty scholars, nearly all of them neatly and comfortably clothed, and nearly all exhibiting bright faces, if not a special eagerness for the acquisition of knowledge. Many small children were present, and these were kindly noticed by Mr. Branley. There were, also, many "young men and maidens," — youth in early, vigorous manhood, and girls in early, blooming womanhood. Branley's eyes glanced along a back seat occupied by a number of the young women, and, with emotions which it would be impossible to describe, he saw that *she* was there. Now, what did the scholars see? A stranger, — a young man, slender in person, having an intelligent, thoughtful face, and gentlemanly, pleasing manners. Mr. Branley won confidence and respect at once. Many scholars, large and small, were ready to say, "We like our teacher very well."

The teacher proceeded to make a roll. Standing at the desk with a pen in his hand, he addressed a lad who sat near,

"My boy, what is your name?"

"John Patton, sir," answered the boy, looking up and speaking boldly.

"And what is your name, my little man?" asked the teacher, speaking softly to a very little fellow who sat next to John.

"Freddy," he stammered, his head drooping and his face covered with blushes.

The older brother supplied the other part of the name, and the teacher proceeded with his work, passing from seat to seat. When he had written fifty or sixty names and nearly completed the roll, he turned to the back seat, occupied by four of the older girls, and said, politely,

"Ladies, please give your names in the order in which you sit. First name?"

"Jane Folsom," answered a blonde, with a toss of the head and a little laugh.

"Next?" inquired the teacher.

"Sarah Van Arsdale," replied a brunette, who was older and more sedate than the other.

"Next?" said the teacher, in a firm tone.

"Caroline McConnell," replied a girl, who had a large, rotund figure, and a fine, healthy complexion.

"Next?" the teacher said, or attempted to say, his voice scarcely articulating the word.

"Flora Calvert," responded the girl whose face and form had haunted Mr. Branley for thirty days and nights.

"That is a beautiful name," he thought. "It will look pretty on paper, as well as sound pleasantly to the ear." But the teacher's hand trembled, and he wrote the name badly. "I will write it better," he said to himself, "when I transcribe the roll."

It suddenly occurred to Mr. Branley that he must have seen these four girls together at a former time. Reflecting a moment, he concluded that these were the well-dressed and attractive young ladies whom he had seen walking on the church common, and whom he had followed to the spring. He was destined to see these girls together many times, not only in the school, but at church, at singing-schools, and at parties.

The teacher proceeded to classify the scholars; but he soon discovered that the object was unattainable, except to a very limited extent. Diversity in the school-books was the insuperable difficulty. There were seven different works on arithmetic, five different spelling-books, three different works on grammar, and about a score of different books intended for the readers. He saw that he must teach the scholars separately, or, at best, only in small classes.

Mr. Branley entered upon the performance of his gen-

eral duties, — assigned lessons, wrote copies, made and mended pens, heard recitations, solved questions in arithmetic, and looked over his large school. His duties were novel and interesting, but his labors were very exhausting, as he found before the close of the day.

Has the teacher of the present time any conception of the inconveniences, toils and trials, experienced by one who taught fifty, sixty, or seventy years ago? The modern teacher has a large school-room, sufficiently lighted, heated, and aired, and supplied with convenient desks, comfortable seats, blackboards, globes, and maps. His school has a full supply of suitable books, and the scholars are classified. He can hear twenty scholars recite almost as easily as he can hear one. He never makes or mends a pen. His wages are fixed — commonly, at least — by intelligent, honorable officials, and not by the most ignorant and niggardly persons in the community. He is sustained, and may be protected in the discharge of his duties, by directors, superintendents, and State authority. The modern teacher may rejoice that he lives at a time when, comparatively considered, his labors are light and his rewards are great.

It may seem that, in respect to one important matter — effective government — the teacher of early times had an advantage over the teacher of the present day. In those times the Bible was authority in all things. The Bible, as was universally believed, authorized family government, and supplied the necessary rules and sanctions. The teacher, exercising a power delegated by parents, felt that he acted under Divine authority, and administered rules prescribed by Prophets and Apostles. Consequently his position was strong, and his government effective. The people never questioned his authority; and, while they may have sometimes questioned his wisdom, or disapproved his temper, they seldom objected to

his customary modes of discipline. At present, the teacher derives his authority from the State, and, in late years, theory and sentimentalism have, to a considerable extent, superseded the teaching of the Bible, in respect to government, rights, laws, and punishments. School authorities, teachers, and many parents, are at sea, without a chart, without a compass. School government is as uncertain, diverse, and changeable, as the whims of legislatures, school boards, and teachers who may not have grown to be men and women. School government, therefore, is necessarily weak and inefficient. Government in the school, and even in the family, is scarcely a shadow of what it was in the early times. Able and experienced teachers now declare that, in the management of schools, "there is no uniformity of thought, and, consequently, no progress;" that teachers "spend their days in more or less blundering experiments;" that there is a necessity for "a science of discipline," based on the "nature of things." Men have clearly discerned an evil in school government, but have failed to provide a remedy. Can there be "uniformity of thought," or can there be a true, adequate, and permanent "science of discipline," unless the Bible is recognized as the supreme authority in the government of schools? The question is submitted as one of the great questions of the age.

Mr. Branley finished his first day's work, and dismissed the school. Almost every boy left the house with a run, spring, and shout. The girls went away in groups, walking or skipping, chatting or laughing. The teacher walked slowly to his boarding-house, wearied, indeed, beyond all former experience, but rather pleased with his school and his duties, and hopeful that rest would restore his physical and mental vigor.

CHAPTER V.

A LOOK AT THE COUNTRY.

WE mourn over the departing glory of the American forests. The mountains and valleys, the rivers and lakes, remain, impressing us with their grandeur, or charming us with their beauty; but the magnificent forests have almost entirely disappeared. Where is the great oak, lifting its huge arms, and supporting, as we fancied in our childhood, the vault of heaven? Where are the stately pines, towering far above common trees, their crests gleaming in the sunshine or waving in the storm, and their robes ever green through summer and winter? Where is the haunt or scene untouched by the hand of man, — haunt or scene, with its beech and birch trees, dense foliage, delightful shade, modest flowers, aromatic airs, mossy rocks, limpid spring, murmuring rill, and free songsters, — a place where poets could quietly dream, where the genii of the woods could have a palace and a home? True, man must have a dwelling-place. He must build houses, villages, cities. He must have countless acres divested of trees, and prepared for cultivation. Urged by his necessities, as well as by his avarice and ambition, he must wage perpetual war against the forest. True, cultivated fields, green meadows, golden harvests, growing towns and cities, present a very grand and interesting spectacle. And yet, we may feel a measure of regret when we see the great forests, with their peculiar beauty, and a very large portion of the creatures which they sheltered and fed, swept from the face of the earth.

The country which surrounded Konneautt Lake had neither mountains or rivers. Apart from the lake, its great natural beauty and attraction were its dense, heavy forests. As these disappeared, the country lost much. If it gained in one way, it certainly lost in another.

A settlement really new may have the appearance of age. Dwelling-houses and barns, constructed with round logs and covered with clapboards, soon decay, and, having stood a few years, may look old and shabby. Neglected fields may be soon overrun with briars and thorns. It must be admitted that, at a certain time, the region which encircled Konneautt Lake was not specially attractive. The first settlers were, generally, very industrious people. But they had assumed a heavy task. To make productive farms and pleasant homes in the great wilderness required the hard, steady labor of many years. The first settlers, as a class, were compelled to live, for a long time, in small, inconvenient, unsightly houses. In many a case, when a dwelling-house had become rotten and scarcely safe, the owner found himself unable to build a new one. Some of the first settlers were indolent, and some were hunters and trappers. The home of a sluggard, in a new settlement or an old one, is never pretty, and never supplied with conveniences and comforts. The home of a hunter or trapper is seldom just what it should be. Some "improvements," as they were called, had been abandoned; and these deserted places tended to give a dreary aspect to the country. Meanwhile the forests were disappearing; and those which remained had lost much of their original beauty. The axe had committed its depredations almost everywhere; besides, it frequently happened that a storm, rushing through an open region, struck the standing timber with irresistible force. The remaining forests, at least in many places, looked torn, thin, and unattractive.

In some respects the population was diverse. There were natives of the State, natives of New England, German and Irish immigrants, and a few others, following their different customs, and using their different languages or dialects. Families differed somewhat in outward circumstances; and they differed widely in intelligence and refinement. Yet there was much social equality: at least, there was much friendly intercourse. The grades which existed among the people were produced, not by a difference in nationality, language, or wealth, but by a difference in education and moral qualities.

There was life in the country. As a whole, the people were busy. Men were busy, clearing land, building fences, plowing, sowing, reaping, sometimes hunting or fishing, and doing, perhaps, a hundred other things. Here and there a new farm was starting in the forest, or a neat and commodious house was rising in close proximity to the old cabin. Women were busy, nursing their babies, cooking, washing, spinning, and weaving, making new garments or mending old ones, and sometimes hoeing or weeding in the garden, — in fact, doing so many things that they could not be named or numbered. The young folks were busy, especially in summer, doing their appropriate work. There were many young, buoyant, exulting hearts in the rising community. Hundreds of rosy faces could be seen in the houses, gardens, and orchards. Hundreds of lively, energetic lads could be seen in the fields and the woods.

Now, had the young people, as a class, no recreations and amusements? Were the young people, as well as the old, enslaved by toil? Did the young men handle the axe, hoe, and sickle, day after day, without any relaxation, without any pleasant change? Did the young women cook and wash, spin and weave, and pursue an endless course of drudgery? Was young life blighted, or prematurely worn out, by work and hardships? Was youth

passed without enjoyment? No. It is true that the young people were required to share in the labors of the house or the field; but they had their periods of rest, their recreations, their amusements. They could not attend theatres, or opera-houses, or fashionable balls; they could not listen to a "star preacher;" they could not hear a lecturer who had gained celebrity by some fortunate accident — perhaps by an act of stupendous folly or wickedness; they could not array themselves in costly fabrics and glittering jewels, and visit the places of fashionable resort; they could not cross the sea and "make the tour of the continent." And yet, these young people had grand opportunities to secure change, recreation, pleasure, amusement, or almost everything demanded by their active, craving nature. They could walk in the sunshine; they could breathe the pure air; they could sail on the smooth waters of the lake, float among lilies — sometimes among ducks, gulls, and swans; they could make excursions to the hills and gather nuts, or to the marsh and gather cranberries; they could ramble in the magnificent forest — that great park of the world; they could stand in the great temple of nature, gaze at the sublime architecture, view the ten thousand chaste and beautiful ornaments, and listen to anthems sung by untrained but inimitable choirs.

Sometimes, near the close of day, young men and maidens issued from almost every house. These young people were healthy and active. They could walk, skip, and run. They never rode in a carriage; they seldom rode on horseback. The young men were commonly clothed in "homespun," and, of course, were somewhat rustic in their manners; but, as a class, they had some education and intelligence; and they had, very generally, the beauty constituted by a full stature, a robust body, and a fair character. The girls wore neat, plain dresses;

they had no rings on their fingers, but they had roses on their cheeks ; as a class, they had the beauty of modesty ; and their hearts overflowed with life and gayety. How lightly they stepped, how merrily they chatted, as they proceeded on their way ! The numerous bands, leaving homes three or four miles apart, converged, met and mingled, constituting, for a time, one people. Why did the young men and the young women leave their homes and come together ? Let us see. Let us observe them on a particular occasion.

CHAPTER VI.

A PARTY.

MRS. CALVERT was a widow. She and her unmarried children lived on a farm lying in the vicinity of Konneautt Lake. Their dwelling-house was rather better than the ordinary class of houses in the neighborhood. There was a large front yard containing some common shrubbery. North of the yard, and adjoining the public road, there was a large garden enclosed with paling, and designed for both flowers and vegetables. On one side of the house there was a pretty valley, with its winding, murmuring brook. On every side there were fields presenting an undulatory surface and a slight southern aspect. The dwelling-house and its adjuncts were, as a whole, neat and attractive ; but the farm, having wanted, for some years, the skill and oversight of an experienced manager, was not in a very good condition. Mrs. Calvert, however, being industrious and careful, and having received, for some time, valuable aid from Charles and Flora, was

able to live in comfort. She was an intelligent and refined woman, and maintained a most respectable position in society. Her good qualities, no doubt, had an important influence on her children.

One evening, early in November, Flora Calvert stood in the front door. The sun had set, — indeed, night had come; but the moon was rising and supplying light to the world. The girl hurriedly looked up the road and down the road, and in almost every direction. She could easily discern objects at a considerable distance; and she now saw many young people approaching the house, some walking on the road, others walking in the fields. Flora recognized, as she thought, two of her particular friends. She stood and watched them, her heart beating with pleasant anticipations. Presently two girls came up, and Flora cried, in gleeful tones,

"Good-evening, Sarah. Good-evening, Jane. You are coming, I see, a thousand strong."

"Oh, no," replied Jane, "not a thousand strong; I guess about a hundred strong. Evansburgh will supply a little army. But, Flora, don't you wish to see a big crowd? We town's people can work, talk, laugh, and romp; and as for eating pies and apples, we surpass all others. Flora, would you not like to see a little crowd from Evansburgh?"

"Yes," answered Flora, gayly. "I wish to see a crowd. We have fifty bushels of apples, which must be pared, quartered, cored, strung, and suspended for drying. Oh, yes, we want a good deal of work done. As for eating pies, that will depend on your good conduct. If you spend your time idly, as Evansburgh people are apt to do, you shall have nothing. But say, girls, who are coming from town?"

"Why, Sophia Hunt, Mary Campbell, and — and — Henry Stafford, George Courtney, and — and — Mr.

Branley. But, Flora, these gentlemen will do you no good. George is too proud to work. Henry will eat all the apples he pares, and more if he can get them. As for our teacher, you must not let him work; paring apples would spoil his hands; and his hands, you know, must be kept in order."

Meanwhile other parties arrived, received warm salutations from Flora, and entered the house. The gentlemen from Evansburgh arrived in due time.

The gathering at Mrs. Calvert's was an "apple-bee," or a "paring." It was designed for work, not for social entertainment and pleasure. However, some people who had lived beyond the merry time of youth, or who were cynical by nature, said it was a "frolic;" work, in their opinion, being no part of the business. In practice, Mrs. Calvert's party happily combined work and pleasure. Indeed, in early times it was often the deliberate purpose of young folks to combine "work and play;" and it is highly probable that their pleasure, associated with useful work, was as real and satisfactory as the pleasure of those who, having money, time, and high social position, make pleasure the sole object of pursuit.

Mrs. Calvert sat in her private room, and paid little attention to the party. Charley had made the preparations, but Flora presided over the hive of workers; Flora was queen. The work was begun and prosecuted systematically; but as machinery had not been introduced, the several processes of the business advanced slowly. Some of the party were not over-diligent, and others were not over-careful. Sometimes a girl seemed to forget what she was about; her eyes turned away from her apple; her fingers and knife ceased to move, and the apple remained for a time half pared. Sometimes a young man, when his thoughts and eyes were engaged with something apart from his work, made his parings entirely too thick,

and so wasted the fruit. But to stop the clatter and insure good work at an apple-bee were recognized as things lying among the impossibilities ; and, consequently, noise and bad work were always cheerfully endured by the housewife.

Almost every large company has a wit or "smart fellow." Mrs. Calvert's party had a very distinguished one, — Henry Stafford. Other young men of the party were sprightly and jocose ; but Stafford was king : no one questioned his supremacy. Stafford was one of the two "storekeepers" who were recognized as the great men of Evansburgh. He was a portly, handsome man, and, as was generally believed, had abilities of a high order. He was older than most of the young men present at Mrs. Calvert's. He had traveled ; he had read many books ; he was a reader of magazines and newspapers ; he was a musician, excelling in vocal music, and able to perform on several instruments ; and he had enjoyed, to some extent, the society of educated and well-bred people. Now, a shallow man may tell a story and raise a laugh ; but Stafford, while he seemed to have an unlimited supply of anecdotes, and could tell them admirably, had such keen perceptions as enabled him to see whatever was ludicrous, or could be made ludicrous, in anything and everything around him ; and he had such power of language as enabled him to give expression to his grotesque ideas and fancies. Consequently, he never failed to be entertaining. At the same time he was gentlemanly and courteous, seldom showing a proud and masterful spirit, or giving offense. Stafford could talk soberly and sensibly ; but sober and sensible talk was not especially needed at an apple-bee. On this occasion he was in his gayest mood, and gave full play to his wit. Everybody listened to him. Everybody laughed at his jokes. During the evening pleasantries often passed

between Stafford and Flora Calvert. He seemed to take great pleasure in exposing himself to this girl's repartees.

"Flora," said Stafford, at one time, "these boys and girls are very idle ; give me a switch, and I will keep them at work."

"Henry," remarked Flora, "the idleness appears to be on your side. I would give the switch to them if I thought they could master you and keep you at work."

"Flora," cried Stafford, at another time, "I am hungry ; won't you pity me, and give me something to eat?"

"Eat apples," said Flora. "Judging from appearances, I must believe that you relish that kind of food." Then, turning to Jane Folsom, she remarked, "Jane, I see you told the truth in regard to Mr. Stafford's great fondness for fruit."

After joking awhile with those who sat near, Stafford suddenly cried out,

"Flora, Flora, I am sleepy ; won't you permit me to go home?"

Flora, standing before the company, said, with a mischievous look, and suppressed tones of voice,

"Go into the other room ; mother will put you in the cradle, and sing a lullaby."

Stafford laughed heartily. The whole company laughed. But, presently, the joker assumed a most serious aspect, threw down his knife and apple, stamped on the floor, and made a speech :

"Fellow-citizens :—Our queen has become haughty ; she is supercilious ; she is tyrannical and cruel. See, she would take me, a man of full age and size, transform me into a baby, put me into a cradle, and sing hushaby. Would not that be an outrage ? It shall not be done. I resist. I will head a rebellion, dethrone this proud, cruel queen, and put another in her place. Who will it be ? Here is Jane the rosy, who would match Lady

Jane Grey ; here is Sarah, with the dark, brilliant eyes ; and here is Caroline, with the stately, majestic form. One of these must be our queen."

Stafford paused in his harangue. Turning his eyes from the girls whose names he had just pronounced, he looked at Flora. She stood not far away, listening keenly, but showing no signs of alarm. He resumed his rhapsody ; but his tone had wonderfully changed, and he reached a totally different conclusion. Whether his words had, or had not, a serious and important meaning is a question which can never be answered.

"After all," said Stafford, addressing the company, "Flora makes an admirable queen. Her looks are superb. She has wisdom and goodness. And, then, she has the 'divine right.' Was she not born queen of this household? Is she not the queen of hearts — the queen of our hearts — at least, the queen of some of them? Well," he continued, using a little Latin which he had found in one of his books, "as Flora is queen *de jure* and *de facto*, I submit to her sovereign pleasure."

More than one person listened eagerly to this strange speech and endeavored to find its meaning.

What was Mr. Branley thinking, saying, and doing, as the evening passed away? He worked pretty steadily ; he spoke frequently to the persons who sat near ; but he did not often join in the laughter. He was, in fact, somewhat reserved and sober, as was perhaps proper for a stranger, and especially for the President of the log college. Meanwhile Branley looked around, watched and listened sharply, and had many reflections. Was he pleased with Flora Calvert? Yes, decidedly. Neat in dress, graceful in form, comely in features, and refined in manners, she stood or walked before him as a very interesting creature. He felt sure that this girl, usually so quiet and thoughtful, but never dull, and always so

modest, though not timid or bashful, had a very bright intellect, — one that fitted her for study, for conversation, for repartee, for business, for everything. And he believed, if he did not feel quite sure, that she had a sweet, cheerful, happy temper, which would, with her other good qualities, make her a delightful companion, and fit her for woman's highest and best sphere, — the sphere of home. Did Mr. Branley make any special discoveries? He was sure that he made one; he was not sure that he made any more. He made the discovery that Flora Calvert had more than one lover. He now felt certain that, counting himself as one, she had at least two. Whether she had a third was a point undecided in his mind. Tom McConnell was one of the party. He was a young man of good appearance; and he was a young man of good habits. He was temperate, industrious, honest, kind, and affectionate. If not greatly admired, he was generally respected and liked. No one, perhaps, ever spoke a word intentionally to injure him, although some people may have casually hinted that he was not the brightest youth in the world. Mr. Branley, looking at Tom and listening to his conversation, came to the conclusion that, whether endowed with mental force or not, he was an honest, worthy young man. Besides, watching Tom's eyes, noticing the variations in the color of his face, hearing his stammering words, seeing his embarrassments, he saw enough and heard enough to make it absolutely certain that this young man's thoughts and affections were devoted to Flora Calvert. But Branley did not feel angry. He scarcely felt a pang of jealousy, a passion so common and so intolerable. He felt resigned to destiny. However, he felt a great pity for somebody, — a pity, perhaps, divided between himself and Tom; for he was sure that one or the other, if not both, would be compelled, at a future time, to bear a great sorrow. Meanwhile Branley

watched another man, — Henry Stafford. He ascertained that Stafford was the noble-looking young man who stood up at church beside the old leader, and whose strong, melodious voice contributed so much to the music of the sanctuary. The undecided point in Branley's mind was, whether this "splendid fellow" did not also love Flora Calvert. And this point was a cause of thought and anxiety for many a day. As for Miss Flora, she was respectful and kind to all the young men, and had, apparently, no special regard for any.

Work must end; pleasure must end; all things must end. The young people who had assembled at Mrs. Calvert's finished their work, partook of refreshments, had their customary plays, — possibly a dance, — separated, and went home. Some of them, it may be presumed, had pleasant thoughts and pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER VII.

WINTER — ITS EMPLOYMENTS AND ITS PLEASURES.

WINTER came; ice formed on Konneautt Lake; snow covered the fields. Hunters put their guns in order, and walked into the woods. Men fed their cattle, provided fuel, cut timber, hauled logs to the saw-mills, and made whiskey. Women, besides attending to their more ordinary work, did much spinning and knitting. Children went to school.

Many people were not pressed with business. Old people sat contentedly by the fireplace. However, the irrepressible young folks looked eagerly around, not indeed for work, but for amusement. They were not dis-

appointed. They had their sleighing parties, their skating parties, perhaps now and then a dance, and very often a singing-school.

Sometimes, as has been noticed, the young people were able to combine work and pleasure. Those two objects were united at the "apple-bee," and the "quilting and chopping." Those objects were united at the "scutching," the young people gladly performing the work for the sake of its accompaniment.

The "scutching-frolic" was a picturesque affair. The young people gathered at the appointed place in their coarsest apparel. Each carried a scutching-knife, or swingle. The young men planted "stocks"—usually oak clapboards sharpened at one end—in the barn-yard, or in sheds and stables. It happened that the stocks commonly stood in pairs; and it happened that a young man, having provided or chosen a pair, stood at one of them, while a young woman stood at the other. The young people began their work with life and energy, made chaff and dust fly, and soon appeared in grotesque outside garments. Did work, or cold, or anything, repress their joyousness, their jokes, and their laughter? No. Did the new vesture of tow hide the symmetry and beauty of their forms? No. Did the dust conceal the flush on their faces or dim the lustre of their eyes? No. When Cupid frisked about, seeking an entrance into a youth's or maiden's heart, was he caught, entangled, and held, by the flaxen fibres, and completely baffled in his purpose? No. He entered without trouble or delay, and made a little unseen world that was full of sunshine, warmth, and delight.

The first singing-school of the season was held in a school-house, two or three miles from the lake. The house was completely filled with young, healthy, blooming humanity. The girls, as was customary, sat around

next the walls on the high seats, and, of course, were favorably situated, if they wished to be seen or heard. The young men and the boys crowded into the middle space. The teacher, compelled to stand in one little spot, could scarcely make the usual sweeps of the arm in keeping time; and he could not at all advance from the "bass" to the "tenor," and from the tenor to the "treble," in order to give the requisite aid to the several parts.

The teacher on this occasion was Mr. Compton. He was the elderly gentleman who led the singing at church. Mr. Compton had taught music for many years, and had probably rendered a good service to the public. It is true that the teachers who followed Mr. Compton declared that he had done more harm than good. But this fact proved nothing: the new teacher, almost as a matter of course, condemns the old teacher, with his rules, modes of teaching, and practice. When Mr. Compton was at church, and engaged in singing an old psalm, he presented a most serious and impressive aspect. He made a different appearance at the singing-school. Sitting or standing amidst a crowd of young people, he was genial, even light, sometimes almost boyish. He delighted in music; and the most lively airs were not disagreeable. He also delighted in the society of young people. He took great pleasure in bringing young folks together, giving them an opportunity to become acquainted and to "fall in love." He often declared—even boasted—that he had never taught a school which had not been speedily followed by at least one wedding. And, doubtless, at this time, when Mr. Compton surveyed the blooming young women and the lively young men, and heard, during intermission, unceasing prattle and laughter, he felt that his school had an auspicious beginning, or one promising the usual results.

The young people of the country sung heartily when they did sing; but hearty singing made them weary, and

they soon needed rest. The kind teacher, therefore, always gave an "intermission." Not a few young persons regarded the intermission as by far the pleasantest part of the evening. Well, on this occasion the interval and rest came as was expected, and the young people certainly improved their opportunities. The young ladies did not leave their seats; they knew very well that the young gentlemen would leave theirs. There sat Jenny the blonde; there sat Sarah the brunette; there sat Caroline the stately; there sat Flora the beautiful; and there sat many others, who had the vivacity of youth, if nothing more. Their bonnets had been removed; and their hair, which had evidently been put up with a special regard for effect, displayed a great variety of graceful styles. Many of the girls wore barred-flannel dresses; some wore calico; others may have worn bombazine; perhaps a few wore linsey-woolsey. All appeared to be in health; many had rosy cheeks; some were decidedly handsome; two or three looked like queens or ladies of high rank. Every face was wreathed in smiles; every heart fluttered with expectation. While the ladies retained their seats, the gentlemen, as was expected, left theirs, pressed and struggled, and, as soon as possible, arranged themselves, respectively, before their favorite girls, with whom they engaged in lively conversation. The confusion and uproar of Babel and Bedlam combined, aided by the noise of fifty nurseries, could hardly have surpassed the confusion and uproar of the time.

Tom McConnell and Charley Calvert met in the crowd, and Tom had something to say:

"Charley, do you think there is another neighborhood which can show as many fine girls as ours can? Look at them! Are they not magnificent?"

"They look well, Tom," said Charley. "We may be, and I believe we are, very proud of them."

Tom was seldom jocose, and probably he was, at this time, far more than half serious. He caught Charley's hand, and continued his somewhat surprising talk.

"Charley, I want to make a bargain with you. Let us exchange sisters. Is it not a grand idea? Can we not trade *even*? Look at the girls, sitting side by side. Both are superb. Flora, we all know, is a beauty; but is not Caroline a beauty, too? I can assure you that she is good. What do you say, Charley?"

Charley had never heard such a rhapsody from Tom McConnell. He was slightly puzzled, but was ready to carry on the joke, or whatever it might prove to be.

"Tom, your proposal is most acceptable," Charley replied. "Nothing would please me better than to exchange Flora for Caroline. And I think no boot need be asked or given on either side. But, Tom, I think that, before we close the bargain, we should consult the girls. Possibly, one, or the other, or both, would object to our arrangement. Let us see them."

Tom assented, and the two young men stood before Flora and Caroline. Charley was the speaker.

"Ladies, — I mean Flora and Caroline, — please give us your attention. We have come on most important business. Tom and I have been making a bargain; it is not yet completed; we await your decision, — approval or disapproval. The bargain is, or is to be, this: I give Flora to Tom, and Tom gives Caroline to me. If you approve the bargain, we shall be happy. If you disapprove — why, we must submit to fate. Ladies, what is your decision?"

At first the girls were evidently a little surprised and bewildered; but they soon recovered their calmness and power of thought, and Flora made a reply:

"Oh, why in such haste? Give us time to think. It is most important business, as you say. Why, you have

been thinking about this for six years, and we have never thought of it at all. Give us time."

"How much time do you want?" inquired Charley.

"About as much as you have had," said Flora, — "that is, about six years."

"How much time do you want, Caroline?"

"About six years," the girl replied.

"Tom," exclaimed Charley, "these young ladies do not know what would be a good bargain—good for themselves as well as for us. Let us leave them to their folly."

Mr. Branley was present. He contributed nothing to the confusion and noise, and very little to the music. But he was observant. He watched the young men in their various movements, and indulged in some speculation in regard to their prospects. Besides, he looked at the girls, especially those whose names have been given, and who were his own scholars. He noted characteristics, as he had often done before. Jane overflowed with life and merriment. Sarah was comparatively sober and quiet. Caroline had not much to say, but, sitting erect, she listened to the prattle of the girls and the compliments of the young men, and seemed to be happy. Flora was cheerful and sociable, but not light and hilarious, like Jane and some others. Branley thought he could see imperfections in all except one: Flora seemed to be faultless.

A "singing," as it was usually called, was held, the following week, in a private house. Mr. Branley was present; and he expected that a singing held in a private house, the young folks sitting on windsor chairs in a nice room, and elderly persons being present as listeners or spectators, would be a very quiet and decorous affair. He was destined to meet a pretty sore disappointment. However, the disappointment was not caused by the teacher or his scholars. The disappointment was caused by an in-

truder. When, and where, has there been a neighborhood that did not contain a ruffian? Where is there a large community, even in this advanced age, that does not contain such a personage, and suffer from his brutality? It is certain that a ruffian lived a few miles from Konneautt Lake; and, unfortunately, he had resolved to attend the singing-school. The teacher performed his duties in an unexceptionable manner. The singers conducted themselves with entire propriety. Old people sat, looked around, listened to the music, and seemed to have much satisfaction. What happened? The ruffian entered, accompanied by a huge dog. The man looked very stout and very surly. The dog looked very big and very ferocious. The man sat down, and was quiet, though his face exhibited a terrible scowl. But the dog run around, run everywhere, and acted as if he had come into full possession of the house and all its contents. The teacher and his scholars attempted to sing, but were confused and balked by the dog, which run, jumped, and plunged, hither and thither. The attention of every one was necessarily turned to the brute, and singing was virtually abandoned, for a time, as an impracticable business. The ruffian made no attempt to expel the dog or keep him quiet; but he closely watched the dog and the people. As the lady of the house remarked afterwards, "He just sat and glowered." He probably expected that an assault would be made upon his companion, and kept himself in readiness for a battle. The teacher said nothing, perhaps waiting for the owner of the house to make a movement. The young men knew the ruffian, and appeared to be afraid of him. Mr. Branley did not know the man, or did not fear him, or felt that the nuisance was insufferable, and must be removed at every hazard. He prepared himself, watched for an opportunity, and, as the dog passed, called into sudden use all the power of his muscles, and

applied his boots to the ribs of the monster, sending him out of the chamber howling with pain. The ruffian instantly sprang to his feet, dashed his coat on the floor, and made a rush towards Branley. The women shrieked, the men shouted, utter confusion and uproar filled the house. Branley eluded the ruffian's attempt to grasp him. The young men, now effectually aroused, and moved by one impulse, seized the furious man, and compelled him to take a seat and be still.

When order was restored, the school resumed its exercises. Meanwhile the young people whispered among themselves, "The schoolmaster has courage as well as talents and scholarship." But Mr. Branley did not feel very comfortable. The ruffian was present, and Flora was absent. The young man did not hear the praise which was bestowed upon him; he came almost to the conclusion that he would not attend another singing-school.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BIT OF PERSONAL HISTORY.

HOWEVER, Mr. Branley did not intend to be deprived of recreation and social enjoyments; and, happily, apart from singing-schools, young people had, now and then, an opportunity to secure pleasant exercise and gratify their social nature. Mrs. Bayne invited him to a party. He was not acquainted with this lady, but he had seen Mr. Bayne at the school-meeting, and regarded him as a gentleman. Mr. Branley resolved to accept the invitation.

Mr. Bayne had come to the settlement at a very early

day. He was finely educated ; he was gentlemanly in his manners ; he had a considerable amount of money ; and he had what was regarded, at the time, as the best of trades. He purchased lots in the new town and a tract of land in the vicinity, and began to build a tannery. He boarded with the Stevensons, who lived a mile or two from the lake.

Unfortunately, Mr. Bayne had a serious fault, — he would not work. He was young, handsome, intelligent, polite, rich ; but he was the laziest man in the settlement, and, possibly, the laziest man in the world. He never finished his tan-house, though he expended on it a large sum of money ; he never finished a vat, though he had begun three or four ; he never finished a piece of leather, though he received many hides, and was daily importuned for finished work. While Mr. Bayne had money, and could hire mechanics and other laborers, there was a slight advance in his improvements. Sometimes a floor was laid, or a window was provided with a sash. He attempted to clear and fence his lots ; but logs and brush remained in some of the corners, and his fences were so crooked and tottering that they drew the notice and ridicule of all the boys in the neighborhood. Mr. Bayne sometimes planted corn and potatoes ; but he seldom cultivated his growing crops, and he seldom gathered anything in autumn. He had a small meadow ; but the grass, even when cut and dried, usually lay exposed to the weather till the approach of winter. Once, by giving his last dollar for help, he was able to cut his grass, cure it, pile it on a wagon, and haul it to his stable. Mr. Bayne, aided by his hired man, had performed an extraordinary amount of labor, and he could not persuade himself, or be persuaded, to attempt anything more without an adequate rest. The wagon was left unloaded. It stood unloaded during the night. It stood unloaded

through the following day. It stood unloaded for two weeks. One night some boys, moved, it was said, by pity for the wagon, upset it, and threw the hay into the muddy road.

In the course of time Mr. Bayne began to think that he needed a wife. But how could he get one? That, in fact, was the problem which disturbed his mind as far as it could be disturbed at all. He could not possibly travel to his old home, a hundred miles away, in order to marry an acquaintance of his early days. He could not even explore the new settlement in order to find a companion. Indeed, to lay a plan and pursue it steadily was something quite beyond his abilities. What could a man do when he was unable to do anything? Well, there were two unmarried women at hand, — Sally and Peggy Stevenson. These ladies were not attractive in person or manners, but they were famous as good housekeepers. Peggy, the younger sister, was not positively ugly, nor was she objectionable on account of age. She was lively and energetic. In fact, she was entirely willing to relieve Mr. Bayne of the effort and trouble usually connected with courtship. And so Mr. Bayne, submitting to what appeared to be destiny, or, rather, accepting the good fortune so generously offered him, agreed to marry Peggy Stevenson. However, to make an engagement and to fulfill an engagement, as events proved, were two different things. Mr. Bayne, with important help, was equal to the first, but he was not equal to the other. Unanswerable questions met and confounded him. How could he provide a new coat? How could he go for the minister? How could he build a house, or turn his tan-house into a suitable dwelling? He was helpless, and Peggy could not give the aid which he needed. She had done much, and was willing to do more; but she could not do everything. She had courted Mr. Bayne, and secured

his consent to enter into married life; she had cheered and encouraged him every day; and, as she was stout and resolute, she might have built him a house; but she could not make or buy a wedding-coat; she could not very well engage the minister or squire; and she could not at all set Mr. Bayne on his feet, compel him to listen to the words of the marriage ceremony, and to say, "I do." The wedding was postponed from time to time. At length poor Peggy, wearied with long waiting, perhaps losing all hope, perhaps becoming indignant and revengeful, suddenly changed her mind, and married another man.

Mr. Bayne lived a bachelor, and he still boarded with the Stevensons. How did he employ himself? He left Stevenson's every morning at about nine o'clock, walked to his tannery, went up-stairs and entered an unfinished room, sat down, read a newspaper which his father had sent, then dozed, or thought about "what might happen," until about four o'clock in the afternoon, and then, arousing himself, he returned to his boarding-house. Day after day, month after month, year after year, Mr. Bayne pursued and endured this monotonous and dreary kind of life. But he was not destined to pursue it forever.

When Mr. Bayne was about forty-five years old, Miss Percy came to Evansburgh, to live with her sister, the doctor's wife. This lady was about thirty. She was a large, stately woman, with a very fair complexion and rather comely features. Miss Percy had several rich dresses, which, however, were somewhat antique in style. Sometimes, arrayed in glossy silk, this lady walked abroad, and made a sensation. She seemed to have everything a lady needed except money and sense.

In one of her walks, or visits, Miss Percy met Mr. Bayne. She saw that he was lonely, and in need of sympathy. Besides, in one of her excursions, she happened

to notice Mr. Bayne's house, — a large, unfinished structure, standing in a suburb of the town. Externally the house looked rather shabby, but she fancied that the interior might be, not only finished, but very fine, and entirely fit for a lady. She concluded that the house just needed a housekeeper to keep it in order. Then Miss Percy indulged in a series of reflections in regard to herself. She was not, certainly, provided with a permanent and comfortable home. She could not pay for her boarding, for she had no money, and she did not know how to work. The doctor, whose practice was not very large and lucrative, might become wearied with his burdens, and begin to complain. Besides, her sister, the doctor's wife, had not a very sweet temper, and no one could tell what might happen. She remembered that bickering had already occurred between them; that, one day, she poured cold water in the tea, and received a sharp reprimand from her sister; that she would have left the house, never to return, if there had been a place to receive her. In fact, she very much needed a home. Such were Miss Percy's reflections. What was the result? She married Mr. Bayne.

The people of Evansburgh and vicinity had a surprise. They heard that Mr. Bayne had taken a wife, or, rather, that Miss Percy had taken a husband. The first Sabbath that followed the wedding brought another sensation. The newly-married pair made their appearance in public. There was service in the church; and Mr. Bayne, stimulated by his new-born happiness, or aided by his energetic bride, was able to dress and reach the church a few minutes before the close of the sermon. Late attendance gave the married pair a certain advantage: everybody was there; everybody was ready to look. Mr. Bayne and his bride entered the large door arm-in-arm, swept forward in majestic style, and seated themselves on a bench, near

the middle of the house. Of course, every person looked at the bridegroom and bride. Their dress was highly picturesque. The bride, who made by far the finer display, was dressed in changeable silk, with plaits and flounces, bows and buttons. Her head-gear was particularly grand and imposing. However, every part of her dress, except the veil, looked somewhat ancient. The weather being warm, Mr. Bayne had put on summer garments. His coat was light in color, light in weight, small in size, — too small to look well, and quite too small to be comfortable; its age was unknown to the public. He wore nankeen pantaloons; the fit was very remarkable. People, judging by their scanty length and breadth, suspected that his mother had made them in the days of his boyhood. He wore a pair of shoes, three or four years old, made of material supplied by himself, — that is, of hide which had been soaked awhile in water, the material having been put into shape by the hands of old Mr. Stevenson. The groom and bride, sitting on a bench, without any support for the back, could not have felt entirely at ease. However, they had the pleasure of being seen, and perhaps admired, by a large congregation, and their stay was short.

Mr. Bayne and his wife had now lived together about twelve years. They had two girls, both old enough to attend school. Mrs. Bayne spent her nights, or portions of them, in the upper story of the old, shabby tan-house; she spent her days, or very many of them, visiting her neighbors, drinking tea, and talking insufferable nonsense. Mr. Bayne, except when driven out by some dire necessity, stayed in his old tan-house day and night. In the course of every two or three months Mrs. Bayne made a party, and invited, as she said, only the nice young people of the community; and, just now, she had a party on hand, and the *élite* were to be present.

The evening of Mrs. Bayne's party proved to be very wet. The rain fell in torrents and flooded the ground. Mr. Branley felt discouraged : he was afraid that the ladies could not attend the party, or, to state the truth distinctly, he was afraid that Flora Calvert would not be present. He saw Miss Flora almost every day, and never saw her without experiencing much pleasure. But when he met her at a party, and saw her in her best attire, wearing her white embroidered cape, and having her hair put up in a new and ornamental style, he was conscious of fresh and intensified delight, — a delight which he eagerly sought, again and again. Besides, meeting Flora in general society, he could, for a time, discard some of the teacher's reserve and dignity, cultivate acquaintance, and enjoy, without violating any rules, the witchery of her smile and the charms of her conversation.

Despondent and unhappy as he was, Branley stepped out, bore the falling rain, waded through mud and water, reached the tannery, knocked at the upper door, and was admitted by one of the girls. He was surprised. Everything, in the house and around the house, was shabby and repulsive ; the old ruined shop was underneath ; vats, now simply pools of filthy water, were near the walls. The old tannery was a large structure, but the part used as a dwelling was small, comprising, Mr. Branley thought, just two apartments, one being a small bedroom, and the other being, at once, a bedroom, kitchen, dining-room, and parlor. The furniture of the larger room was old, broken, and unsightly ; some of the chairs had no backs ; the table was deprived of a leaf ; the drawers of the bureau and cupboard had lost their handles. There were window-curtains and bed-curtains, but they were old, faded, and torn, and greatly needing a bath ; there were ornaments on the mantel and bureau, but they looked like the antiquated toys of children ; there was a broom, but it was

so worn as to be incapable of raising a dust. The house was not clean; the air was not pure and sweet; nothing was in order; nothing was pleasant; scarcely anything was even tolerable. Yet Mrs. Bayne assumed to be a fine lady, sitting erect, or moving about grandly in her flowing robes, and talking eloquently about the genteel people who were to grace her party.

Another guest arrived. The new guest was Henry Stafford. Mrs. Bayne was elated beyond measure, and welcomed him in grandiloquent phrases. If Mr. Courtney, Miss Bostwick, and Miss Calvert, had come, in addition to the merchant and teacher already present, her happiness would have been complete. Mr. Stafford joked and laughed, as he was accustomed to do on all occasions except the most serious ones. No more guests appeared; and Stafford, having chatted gayly for fifteen or twenty minutes, turned to Mrs. Bayne, and remarked,

"We cannot expect the ladies to-night. They cannot get here; and, without them, we can do nothing, enjoy nothing, be nothing. The ladies are, not only the ornament, but the indispensable part, of creation. What would this good man be, and how could he live, Mrs. Bayne, if you were not here? The ladies may get along without the gentlemen, but the gentlemen cannot get along without the ladies. Therefore, I suggest that you postpone your party till Tuesday evening of next week. We are, indeed, profoundly sorry that you are not able to carry out your generous purpose. We appreciate your parties; they are an unfailing source of pleasure and profit. When you give a party we rejoice; when, as we must now, miss a party, we mourn; but we must submit to necessity; we cannot rule the weather, dry up the roads, and make a pleasant evening. Therefore, Mrs. Bayne, postpone your party."

This was extravagant language, and, further, it was

gross flattery ; and Stafford may have thought that words so extravagant, and flattery so gross and palpable, could mislead no one and do no harm. Yet Mrs. Bayne, apparently, accepted the extravagant words as the sincere expression of regard for women in general, and for herself in particular. She postponed the party in accordance with Stafford's suggestion.

Stafford and Branley walked back together. They were silent at first. Branley was not entirely pleased with Stafford's conduct. He had laughed at Stafford's jokes ; but he had listened to the flattery, and had observed that, whatever may have been designed, the flattery really misled and injured Mrs. Bayne, strengthening her vanity and exciting most absurd expectations. Branley's dissatisfaction was rather increased by what he presently heard.

"Will you attend the party?" Mr. Branley inquired.

"No," the other said, firmly.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I never attend Mrs. Bayne's parties. She is a great f—l, a perfect compound of vanity and silliness. I was wearied with work in the counting-room, and needed some recreation. I happened to think of Mrs. Bayne's party, and came for a little fun. I will not be at the party next week."

"But you virtually promised to attend," said Branley.

"Well," replied Stafford, "I can send an apology for absence ; she will accept it, and all will be right."

"But that would be deception again, would it not?"

"The fact is, Mr. Branley, it will make no difference whether an apology is sent or not. What I do everybody approves. Then Mrs. Bayne cannot be offended. If I were to abuse her by words or deeds, she would smile and be happy. She would take anything from me as a favor."

Branley felt confounded. "What sort of people have I

seen this evening?" he inquired in his own mind. "What sort of a man is this Stafford? I like him, and I don't like him. He is very smart, and he is very funny; but then, how lordly, boastful, and reckless he is, or seems to be, sometimes! People say that he has been admitted into the highest circles. Has he acquired some of the deceit practiced in high life? He has talents enough for anything. He is very generous, giving money and service freely for the benefit of the public or the relief of the poor. He is certainly very popular. But what he will do, and what he will be, is not apparent."

A week passed away. Meanwhile Branley learned much respecting the Bayne family. He learned that Mr. Bayne was very nearly a nonentity in the family and in the community. He learned that Mrs. Bayne was a gadder and a gossip; that she neglected her house and family; that she left home almost every morning, stayed among her neighbors all day, sipping tea and retailing scandal, returned home late in the evening, and boxed Mr. Bayne's ears when he grumbled too loudly or too long.

Stafford observed Branley passing the door of his counting-room, and, calling him, remarked,

"This is a beautiful evening for the party, — no rain, no mud. The girls can attend, if they wish to do so. Do you intend to go, Mr. Branley?"

"I believe I shall not be there," he replied.

"Well, you are just sensible. Not a girl will be there. If you should go you would see nobody; nor would you get a morsel to eat, unless Mrs. Bayne has been successful in begging. She has sent her little girl all around, — to one place for flour, to another place for butter, to a third place for eggs; and the little girl has been here, asking for tea and sugar on trust. You will soon agree with me that Mrs. Bayne is good for nothing, unless it be to give us a little amusement."

Mr. Branley did not go to the party. And he soon learned that no person went. Meanwhile he acquired more information in respect to the Bayne family. He learned, among other things, the particulars of a singular fight which had occurred between Bayne and his wife. The fight, as it was described to him, appeared so exceedingly ludicrous, that he thought about it, and hardly anything else, for several days and nights. The idea that Mrs. Bayne deserved ridicule, and not pity, seized and held him. Perhaps, too, the idea that ridicule could amuse the world, and even effect great reforms, entered his mind and influenced his conduct. However this may be, it is certain that Mr. Branley wrote a ballad, and read it to a few persons, Stafford being one of them. The ballad is subjoined, as a specimen of literary work in the early times, and as a true description of a remarkable scene. It may be premised that the writer applied to Mrs. Bayne a name and title by which she was known in the neighborhood.

LADY HOPEFUL BELDAM.

A lady, with a stylish name,
Dwells in our little city;
And she has ever-growing fame,
Though neither good or witty.

She has a husband, as is right,—
A house with much adorning,
In which, when she returns at night,
She tarries till the morning;

Then sails abroad, as she may choose,
As fine as art can make her,
Just ready for Old Nick to use,
If he should please to take her.

But here occurred a sad affair,
As is, indeed, so common
Wherever live a wedded pair,—
That is, a man and woman.

One day there came a certain boy
Old idle Kate to borrow,
When he, the simile of joy,
Produced a world of sorrow.

The man was neighborly and kind,
And kind was his decision;
The woman had another mind,
And, lo! a dire collision.

For, as he stepped beyond his door, —
An act he does but seldom, —
He saw his lady rush before, —
The Lady Hopeful Beldam.

And then he stood with puzzled face,
For saddle, bridle, trimming,
So strangely bounded from their place,
And sought a pool for swimming.

But, still, with ease he bridled Kate,
And had the silly notion
That he could lead her through the gate,
Yet cause no fresh explosion.

He tried, but lost the joys of life,
This stupid act committing;
In vain he stammered, "Wife, O wife!"
Vain, gasping, coughing, spitting.

For madam, seeing his intent,
Secured a proper station,
And, as he through the portal went,
Began *an operation*.

Nor did she cease to pant and pound
Till he had half repented,
As cheek and chin, and parts around,
Grew sorely discontented.

In fact, she took uncommon pains;
Her blows were hard and many,
And would have mollified his brains,
Had fate allowed him any.

Thus she defended woman's right
To have her own opinion, —

To talk and argue, scold and fight,
And exercise dominion.

And yet, he set the lad astride, —
This man with courage topful;
But, as the boy began his ride,
Again came Lady Hopeful;

And just as soon as she was there,
Old Katy lost her bridle;
The boy, retreating from the mare,
Gave her a chance to idle.

Now, gentle mister, by-the-by,
Was guilty of a blunder;
For, lo! his fist was lifted high,
Then fell on what was under;

And, oh, it struck, — he was so blind, —
It struck his lady's shoulder, —
Struck hard and fast, as if designed
In other form to mould her.

Some of the neighbors lightly say
She seemed as brisk as ever, —
That, even in her youthful day,
She danced as finely never.

But others solemnly declare,
The energetic mauling,
The writhing, shrieks, and whole affair,
Were tragic and appalling.

And, lo! they raised so hot a breeze,
While this commotion lasted,
That (so they tell) surrounding trees
Had bloom and verdure blasted.

But passion cooled and languor grew,
And fighting lost its pleasure,
And so the pair retired from view,
Repenting at their leisure.

When Stafford had heard the ballad read, he exclaimed,

"Why, Branley, you agree with me already, and your

ridicule is quite as lavish as mine. But, my dear sir, take a little care. You may not be able to do things with impunity as I can. If Mr. and Mrs. Bayne should see these verses, they would make peace at home, unite their forces, and furiously attack the common foe."

Mr. Branley was affrightened. He saw that he was imperiling his character and position as a teacher. He resolved to destroy or conceal his ballad.

CHAPTER IX.

"BARRING OUT."

"BARRING out the master" was a singular custom. It must have originated in a remote and semi-barbarian age. It prevailed, in some quarters, during a considerable part of the present century. When common schools were established by law, the strange, barbarous custom disappeared.

"Barring out" occurred on Christmas. Scholars met at the school-house early in the morning, "barred" the door and the long, narrow window, and awaited the arrival of the "master," as the teacher was called in the early times. When scholars reached the school-house at a late hour, they were admitted through the window at an aperture which could be readily opened and shut. "Barring out the master" was a business greatly enjoyed by the young men and large boys; and old people have said that it was quite as much enjoyed by some of the teachers.

The master, arriving at the usual time, and pretending to be ignorant of the revolutionary movement, attempted to open the door. Finding the door fastened and

guarded in the inside, he sternly commanded the scholars to open it. The scholars, of course, did not heed the master's order; and war followed, continuing a longer or shorter time. The master always failed to effect an entrance by force; and, sooner or later, he signed a paper, binding himself to give the scholars a grand treat on New Year's Day.

When the festive day arrived, the scholars assembled in great force, ate apples, drank whiskey, played ball, or engaged in other amusements. Commonly, the master was present, accepting a share of the apples and whiskey, and sometimes participating in the games.

Well, another Christmas was approaching, and Mr. Branley heard reports that disturbed him.

"They are going to bar you out," a woman said one day.

Branley made no reply, but he instantly formed some resolutions. He resolved that he would give no countenance to the old, barbarous custom. He resolved that he would, if possible, prevent the contemplated movement in his own school. And he resolved that, if he should be barred out, he would issue no orders, use no violence, sign no paper, and give no treat.

In fact, the young teacher of Evansburgh resolved to make war upon the old, barbarous custom, and destroy it. He looked around for help. He learned that Mr. Thompson had a school, three or four miles distant, on one side of the lake, and that Mr. Kerr taught a school, three or four miles distant, on another side. He visited these teachers, denounced "barring out" as a relic of barbarism, and proposed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with a view to the extermination of the detestable custom. Thompson and Kerr were Irishmen. They had been "barred out" many times. However, they professed to agree with Branley, and promised to discountenance the

old custom in their schools and districts respectively. At the same time, as these men engaged in the work of reform, they seemed to show but little enthusiasm and to anticipate but little success.

As time passed, Branley talked to the citizens and endeavored to win them to his views. And one day, as he was about to close the school, he addressed the scholars as follows :

"Christmas is near, and I learn that there is some talk about barring out the master. Do you not know that barring out is a barbarous and absurd custom? It is not simply ridiculous, it is extremely foolish; it is, in my opinion, decidedly injurious,—injurious to both teacher and scholars. Look at the custom, see it as it is, and judge for yourselves. Do you not see that it is wholly unbecoming a civilized, Christian people? Now, I make a proposal. If you conduct yourselves properly on Christmas,—that is, as you do on other days, I will give you a liberal treat on New Year's Day. I cannot give you whiskey, as I never buy or use any; but I will provide an ample quantity of fruit. I like to see young folks happy. A view of your innocent mirth and enjoyments affords me a great deal of pleasure. Now, I am sure that these little boys and girls are fond of apples, and I would like to see them with one in each hand and several in their pockets or baskets. Apples are scarce; but I know that I can find them, and good ones too. Will you permit me to make you happy on New Year's Day, and to find a great deal of pleasure for myself? Consider my proposal, and be wise. If you conduct yourselves properly on Christmas, you shall have all the apples you can eat and a long time for play. If you conduct yourselves improperly, you shall have nothing."

The teacher's kind words had some effect. Perhaps his positive announcements had more. Christmas came

and passed without any war, commotion, or trouble, in the Evansburgh school. Branley was delighted; and, with much pleasure, as well as zeal and energy, he began to prepare for the promised festival.

Messrs. Thompson and Kerr had a different experience. Both were barred out; and, while they fulfilled the promise made to Mr. Branley, their opposition to the old custom was shown in different ways and was accompanied or followed by different results.

Mr. Kerr pursued this course: Arriving at the school-house and finding the door fastened, he said, pleasantly, "Scholars, show me your paper." A scholar presented a paper, containing the usual promise. The teacher took the paper, promptly wrote his name, returned the paper, and then said, "Now, scholars, open the door." The scholars, having no reason for keeping the door closed, removed the fastenings and opened it. The teacher walked in and said, "Now, scholars, take your seats." The scholars, having no excuse for disobeying the order, sat down, and "barring out" was over. The young men and large boys were sorely disappointed and vexed: they had missed all the anticipated sport.

Mr. Thompson reached his school-house at nine o'clock, walked up to the door, raised the latch, and gave a push. The door refused to move, — in fact, seemed as immovable as the walls. Speaking in the sternest manner, he commanded the scholars to open the door. One of the scholars said,

"Come round to the window and we'll talk to you."

"Open the door! open the door!" shouted the master.

A young man replied, "No; we are not ready yet; there is an item of business which must be attended to first."

The master became furious, and kicked the door violently, shouting, at one time, "Open the door, or I'll

break every bone in your bodies ;” and, at another time, “Open the door, or I’ll skin you alive.”

The little children began to cry. Even some of the large girls were affrightened ; but the young men and large boys felt that the good time — a time long anticipated — had actually come. Their glee was irrepressible ; their enjoyment was intense.

Mr. Thompson shouted in vain. No one heard or heeded him. He thumped and kicked in vain. The door seemed to be a part of the wall, and did not yield the breadth of a hair. There was quiet for a minute, and then the teacher appeared at the window, uttering terrible threats. A scholar presented a paper which read thus : —

“I promise to give my scholars on New Year’s Day three bushels of apples and one gallon of whiskey.”

He took the paper, tore it into bits, and threw the bits on the snow.

“You’ll sign the next one,” the young man said, and then sat down to write another.

The master seized a stick of firewood, assaulted the window, and, with a few heavy strokes, not only rent the greased paper which had excluded the cold and admitted the light, but actually loosened the barriers and made a breach. However, looking into the house, and seeing fifteen or twenty stout young fellows, some of them armed with bludgeons, and all ready for battle, he made no attempt to enter. He then climbed up to the roof, and endeavored to remove the clapboards, perhaps with the hope that he could descend suddenly and unexpectedly among the rebels, and be able to reduce them to obedience. The plan failed. Then he clambered up the low chimney, and made an effort to descend ; but, being instantly greeted with fire and smoke, he was forced to retire. Quiet reigned everywhere for a few minutes.

“What is he doing?” the scholars asked each other.

They listened; but they heard nothing. A scholar looked out, and, lo! Mr. Thompson was two or three hundred yards away, running as if his life was in peril. Three or four young men instantly tumbled from the window and pursued the runaway. The chase was a hot one, the scholars peeping through chinks of the house and watching it with the deepest interest. The young men were too swift for the old man; they overtook him, captured him, and brought him back by force. One of the young men presented a paper, and inquired,

"Will you sign now?"

"No," he replied; "not now, nor at any other time."

The young men who had remained in the house opened the door, marched out in a body, seized the obstinate man, and, aided by the others, forcibly dragged him down a hill. They came to a brook, and followed it till they found a pool of water three or four feet in depth. Stopping, the young men laid their captive on the bank. A crowd of boys stood on higher ground, looking and listening eagerly.

"Do you see that water?" the young men inquired, addressing the prostrate man.

"Yes, I see it," he replied, scornfully.

"Well, sign the paper or take a cold bath," the young men said, endeavoring to give a strong emphasis to their words. "Will you sign?"

"No," the master growled.

The scholars prepared to plunge him in the icy water; but a boy cried out,

"Keep his clothes dry, or you will give him a cold."

Acting on this timely suggestion, they divested him of his coat and waistcoat, and then one presented the paper, repeating the old question,

"Will you sign it?"

"No," responded the stubborn man.

Fully resolved to give him a dip in the cold water, the young men proceeded to remove another portion of his garments, and, lo ! the master suddenly yielded, took the paper, and wrote his name.

The spectators, including those who stood on the higher ground, seeing the victory, raised such a shout as could hardly be surpassed, even by school-boys, in any part of the world.

Mr. Kerr's scholars, having had no sport on Christmas, appreciated the festival on New Year's Day. Mr. Kerr spent a part of the day at the school-house, partaking of the fruit and watching the players. Mr. Thompson's scholars received the promised treat ; but some of the boys, it may be presumed, thought that the feasting and playing were tame and insipid matters compared with the fun enjoyed on Christmas. Mr. Thompson did not show himself on New Year's Day. Perhaps his recollections were not pleasant. He spent the day in a neighboring still-house, talking to the distiller about Ireland, and comforting himself with draughts of the liquor then known as "rye tea."

Mr. Branley's scholars had a great festival on New Year's Day, and enjoyed it intensely. Apples of the best quality, supplemented by pies, cakes, and doughnuts, supplied a rich feast. Then there was a long time for play. Youth, healthy blood, and good-humor, furnished an adequate stimulus, and whiskey was not needed. Mr. Branley was present, sharing in the feast, and also in the games. His recollections were entirely pleasant. And he was cheered with the idea that civilization had made a fresh advance.

CHAPTER X.

PROGRESS.

MR. BRANLEY felt a great interest in his school. He made a strong and continuous effort to advance his scholars in their respective studies; and the evidence of progress, seen among his scholars generally, gave him much satisfaction. But his work and care proved to be wearisome and oppressive. The variety of books in the school, precluding the formation of classes, caused a vast amount of unnecessary labor. The making and mending of pens not only employed much time, but was often a pretty sore annoyance. Sometimes, when the teacher was listening to a recitation in grammar, or solving a question in arithmetic, — perhaps his head aching severely and his nervous system in a most irritable state, — a scholar would come with the request, "Please, sir, mend my pen," giving the poor teacher a shock somewhat similar to that produced by an electric battery. The exercise of government and discipline in a school so large, and comprising so many adults, was a heavy task. Sometimes young men, presuming on the teacher's youth, were inclined to be a little unruly; and sometimes the young women, presuming on the teacher's gallantry, were inclined to gratify their love of mischief and frolic; but, as Mr. Branley was always resolute and firm as well as calm and gentlemanly, he never encountered any serious trouble.

The teacher was occasionally annoyed by some of his patrons. The people in general were very courteous, never interfering with his management, and never uttering a complaint. But the district, like all others, contained

a few of those wise, active, watchful people, who perceive all mistakes, who are never satisfied with anything, and who are seldom or never quiet. Then it may be remembered that Mr. Branley taught at the commencement of the "transition period," or when new theories respecting government and discipline began to agitate families, schools, and communities.

It is certain that Mr. Branley was disposed to make experiments; and it is certain that his experiments brought some trouble. Failing to govern satisfactorily simply by "moral suasion," and unwilling to use the rod, though not at all afraid of Bradlock, he tried punishments of different kinds. Sometimes he compelled a naughty child to stand in a corner or on a bench, or to stay in the house at noon. One day, Amy Hunt, a girl eight or ten years old, behaved badly, and was placed on a pile of firewood. She was exposed to the gaze of many eyes, and, no doubt, felt very uncomfortable. What happened? The child went home and complained to her mother; and the teacher, meeting Mrs. Hunt one day, was compelled to listen to the following passionate words:

"Mr. Branley, why did you set Amy on a wood-pile and make her a laughing-stock for the whole school? What terrible thing did she do, Mr. Branley? I had a mind to whip her severely."

"She did not do any terrible thing," the teacher replied, calmly; "but she did something, and received a light punishment. She received enough, I think; she does not need any punishment from you, Mrs. Hunt."

"I tell you, Mr. Branley," the woman exclaimed, speaking warmly, and making her meaning clear, "you must use the rod; you shan't set my girl on a wood-pile."

The teacher walked away from the angry woman. But he did not dismiss from his thoughts the matter about

which they had been speaking. He was troubled. In fact, he began to suspect that the woman might be right and he himself might be wrong, or that, in punishing a child, it would be better to inflict physical pain than mental suffering.

It appears that the question which troubled Mr. Branley many years ago troubles parents and teachers at the present time; and inquirers are apt to be misled or left in darkness. The parent or teacher asks, "What measures shall I employ in government and discipline?" A wise and advanced thinker replies, "Use no degrading punishments." But while the parent or teacher ponders the statement and inquires, "What punishments are degrading and what are not?" a reformer and thinker, still more advanced, comes forward and says, dogmatically, "All punishments are degrading; all produce a sense of humiliation and disgrace; all excite wrath and hostility rather than promote true humility and real amendment; all, therefore, are injurious; govern by love and gentleness." The inquirer may be more perplexed than before; or he may be carried away by the new philosophy. However, the man who studies the Holy Scriptures, and accepts their teaching, learns that much of the modern philosophy is false. He learns that the Ruler of the Universe, while actuated by love, uses punishments; that Divine punishments, inflicted on mankind in the present world, may be corporal, or mental, or both; that Divine punishments may, or may not, produce amendment; that Divine punishments are designed to deter the innocent from transgression as well as to promote the reformation of the guilty. And he learns that man, following the Divine example, actuated by the same principle,—love,—pursuing the same end,—the cure and prevention of wrong,—may, in his own proper sphere, and in a restricted way, use punishments, both corporal and mental. The

man who has faith in the Bible should not heed the cry, "All punishment is degrading"; nor should he hesitate, in certain emergencies, to use the instrument which Solomon recommends, — the rod.

Mr. Branley had read a volume or two on the subject of physiology. He had read a few scraps in the newspapers in regard to gymnastics. Besides, he was accustomed to think for himself about the conditions of health and happiness. He now entertained the idea that children should breathe the pure air as much as possible, enjoy the sunshine, and exercise their limbs and lungs. Accordingly, when noon arrived, he encouraged the scholars to leave the house, engage in play, run, laugh, and shout. One day, during the usual interval, a great number of scholars were indulging in out-door amusements, the large boys playing "town-ball," the small boys playing "corner-ball," and the girls playing something that suited them. Of course, the players made some noise. It happened that the teacher was a spectator, taking much pleasure in seeing the pleasure of others. And it also happened that Mr. Altman, the Dutch member of the school committee, rode through town. He passed near the school-house; he saw the scholars at play, the large boys at one place, the small boys at another, the girls in a quarter of their own, — all engaged, all in a sort of frenzy, all shouting, laughing, or screaming; he saw the commotion, heard the uproar, and his soul was stirred within him. Then he espied Mr. Branley, and instantly resolved to perform a great service. Riding up hastily to the teacher, he shouted,

"What dish mean, Mr. Branley? Dese poys and girls be yellin' and whoopin' like Injuns. Dish won't do at all at all."

The teacher offered a slight apology for the noise of the scholars, and then walked towards the school-house. The

angry man rode away, thinking, it may be presumed, that he had rendered important aid to the cause of American civilization.

But Mr. Branley committed an offense, — a real, undeniable offense. One morning, as the school was about to open, it was reported to the teacher, by several eyewitnesses, that Bradlock's big, stupid boy, Sam, somehow getting alive and active, had worried an old, blind, miserable dog. Branley hated cruelty almost as much as he hated anything; and without reflecting that he occupied the position of a teacher, and was addressing scholars, he exclaimed, somewhat emphatically, "Sam is a *brute!*" The unfortunate word was immediately reported to the public. And that was not all: a certain profane word was soon prefixed by Madam Rumor, and so Mr. Branley stood before the public as a man addicted to "profane swearing." "He is not a proper person to teach," said one. "He should be expelled from the school," said another. The young man felt a keen mortification. He had plumed himself on his morality. He had often declared, perhaps boastfully, that he never indulged in profane language. But now it was charged that he had used a most profane and scandalous word; and many persons believed that the charge was true. Feeling most uncomfortable, Branley took much pains, as he went about among the people, to state the exact truth, and admitting that he had used a certain harsh word, while positively denying that he had used a profane one. What followed? Some persons believed, or pretended to believe, that the teacher's statement virtually admitted the truth of the whole charge; and it was now reported that he had confessed his guilt! The teacher's humiliation was complete. But a new feeling rose in his mind. It was anger. He saw, or imagined that he saw, a disposition to blast his character and destroy him. His manhood, or human nature,

was aroused. He resolved to defend himself, and even make reprisals. But a reaction occurred among the people. As Branley was about to declare war against all mankind, he discovered that half of the people were on his side, and that the other half were coming over rapidly. The people had looked at Sam's conduct and seen its enormity. And now they not only believed the teacher's statement, but excused — nay, justified — his use of a certain strong word. Some even went so far as to say, though not, perhaps, with the approval of the majority, that a stronger word — the very word which had been attributed to the teacher — was really needed suitably to characterize the cruel boy. Talk and commotion ceased. The school continued to be full and prosperous.

Mr. Branley and his school had a visitor now and then. One day a knock was heard, the door was opened, a large, portly gentleman walked in, and introduced himself as Mr. Moreland. Every person knew that this gentleman was President Judge. Branley had not been much in the company of lawyers, and he had never spoken to a judge; he, therefore, felt, at first, some affright and embarrassment. The Judge was extremely polite and affable; he made inquiries in regard to the progress of the scholars; and, receiving favorable answers, congratulated the teacher on the prosperous condition of the school. He sat awhile and warmed himself. He rose, looked over the school, gave a word of encouragement to the teacher and his scholars, bowed courteously, and retired. The teacher and his scholars were pleased. Branley felt that he had been highly honored by this call. He had a strong suspicion, if not a conviction, that the Judge was seeking good material for a lawyer — perhaps for a successor in the judgeship. The scholars, having seen a great man, had their share of satisfaction.

At another time, when the door was opened, a tall,

slender, elderly man walked into the house. He introduced himself, stating that his name was Cowell, and that he was a teacher. Mr. Branley received him courteously. This man had taught many schools, and was extensively known. He had some eccentricities ; indeed, some people thought that he was not perfectly sane ; yet he was unusually successful and popular in his chosen profession. Mr. Cowell was commonly regarded as a very learned man, and appeared to fill the place of the village school-master described by Goldsmith :

“ And still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.”

The old gentleman surveyed the school with much interest. He listened to several recitations ; he glanced at the copybooks ; and he said a word or two on the several branches of study. At last, complying with Mr. Branley's request, he made a formal speech. It was simply this : —

“ My young friends, this is your good time — your best time ; study hard ; resolve to excel in everything ; be intelligent, virtuous, and useful, and you will be happy. ‘ Fear God and keep his commandments.’ My dear young friends, I bid you farewell.”

As Mr. Cowell was retiring, he turned, and, looking at Mr. Branley, said, “ Will you come to the door for a minute ? ” The two men advanced to the door, walked out and stopped, Cowell standing on the ground, Branley standing on one of the steps. The old gentleman, speaking in a low voice, remarked,

“ Mr. Branley, you are a fine young man. You have talents, which may bring you honor, as well as enable you to be useful ; you have ambition, and a proper ambition is a very good thing ; you wish to improve as a scholar, and I wish to encourage and help you. Just now, I wish

to correct your pronunciation of a certain word. *Mirage* is not pronounced as if written miradge, with the accent on the first syllable, but as if written merazhe, with the accent on the last syllable."

"I thank you, Mr. Cowell," the young man said, promptly and warmly. "I wish you would come every day and correct my faults."

"That cannot be," Mr. Cowell remarked, while a smile passed over his wrinkled face. They shook hands, and the good old man went on his way. The young teacher never forgot Mr. Cowell.

While advancing his scholars, Mr. Branley improved himself. He acquired self-government. He became profoundly sensible that he must govern himself in order to govern others. He was often tried. The odd, comical words and actions of little children tried his risible nature severely; the sly pranks and mischief of the larger scholars tried his temper. He mastered himself, and was able, in the most trying circumstances, to maintain self-possession, calmness, and dignity. His daily contact with minds that were sharp, inquisitive, and almost as mature as his own, improved his faculties. The necessities of his position, requiring him to study, to attack and solve all sorts of problems in arithmetic, grammar, and the other branches, and to listen carefully to the reading of many books, added constantly to his intellectual stores.

But did Mr. Branley make progress in love and courtship? No. Flora Calvert attended school regularly. She was quiet; she was studious; she always recited well; she caused no trouble whatever; she was always respectful to the teacher, always met him with a beautiful smile, always spoke to him in a voice that was soft and gentle, or, as he thought, very musical and sweet. Now, the young man esteemed this girl, admired her, — in fact, loved her; yet he made no advances, no declara-

tions, no efforts whatever to engage her attention and win her heart. He treated her respectfully and kindly; but he did no more. He reasoned thus: "I am young, — too young to marry; why should I try to win a young girl's affections? I am a stranger here; why should I be obtrusive? Flora is surrounded by old friends; she knows them, and they know her. I am sure that among these old acquaintances she has, beside a score of admirers and suitors, a real, ardent lover; he is a good young man, and he could give her a pleasant home. Why should I interfere? Why should I come between this honest, gentle-hearted youth and the girl that he has always known and always loved?" Reasoning in this way, Mr. Branley deliberately laid a restraint upon his heart, his words, and his actions. However, his unselfish and extraordinary course was ever associated with this reflection: "Still, I love Flora Calvert; and if Providence should remove obstacles, — if, some day, I could rightly press my suit, and could win her heart, this dear girl should be mine. I must wait and hope."

Did Mr. Branley make progress in religion or spiritual life? He certainly did not forget the sermon which he had heard in October. The words, "Come to the living water," — words which had rung in his ears for several days and nights, frequently recurred to his mind. Very often, indeed, as he looked at the meeting-house, — and he saw it every day, — he almost fancied that he heard the old preacher addressing a thirsty, fainting multitude, and saying, with intense earnestness, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Mr. Branley habitually read the Holy Bible, endeavoring to learn its truths and conform to its precepts; and, as far as he had opportunity, he associated with good people in worship and in work.

An event which had occurred in the early part of the

winter was certainly adapted to make the young man thoughtful and serious. A literary society held its meetings on the eastern side of the lake. Branley delighted in literary matters, and one evening, sensible that he needed physical exercise, and also some mental change or recreation, he resolved to walk over the ice, attend a meeting of the society, and hear a debate. He went alone. The evening was perfectly calm. The air possessed its most stimulating and delightful qualities. The clear blue sky displayed ten thousand brilliants. There was a "sea of glass," the ice being fresh, smooth, even transparent, receiving, and, at the same time, mildly reflecting, the light of the stars. The young man thought that he had never seen so much beauty. At times he almost fancied that a shower of gems had fallen, scattering and flashing over the bosom of the lake. He thought, too, that he had seldom or never enjoyed so much pleasure. Though in solitude and comparative darkness, he felt a wonderful exhilaration. He ran, he skated, he bounded over the ice with great rapidity. His mind was so occupied with the scene above and around him, or was so absorbed in the pleasures of the passing moment, that he had scarcely a thought of the prospective debate. He certainly had no thought of danger. The active and happy youth passed beyond the middle of the lake, reached the place where the water was supposed to be deepest, and was running, or skating, or skipping, lightly and swiftly, when his foot encountered a rough spot; he fell headlong, struck the ice with great force, broke it, and found himself sinking in the water. It happened that a piece of ice, five or six feet long and three or four broad, sunk beneath him, and gave him some support. Instinctively he made a spring — it was a spring for life — and alighted on unbroken ice, which, happily, bore his weight. He stepped lightly and carefully forward, and escaped from

the terrible danger. He turned, looked at the broken ice, thought of the dark, deep, cold water below, and shuddered. "God has been kind," he murmured to himself. "Should I not give Him my heart, and serve Him forever?" Branley never forgot that night and its peril. Very often, indeed, he recalled to mind his solitary walk or run over the thin, deceptive ice, and his plunge into the water. Very often he reflected how he might, unseen by the eyes of man, unknown to every human being, have sunk in the abyss and perished. And he never thought of the night and its peril without a fresh shudder, and without a renewal of his vow to the great Preserver. It is highly probable that the experience of that evening had an important influence on his life.

Mr. Branley did not enjoy the debate. He listened abstractedly, — in fact, chiefly employed himself in drying his clothes, and thinking about his perilous adventure. He returned to his lodging in a serious mood. During the following day he was unusually sober and thoughtful, and when he was about to close the school in the evening, he preached a little sermon upon the dangers which beset human life, and illustrated his subject by a reference to his late adventure on the lake.

CHAPTER XI.

CLOSE OF THE SCHOOL.

THE snow and ice had almost disappeared. April was near, with its showers and fickle smiles. The last day of March was the last day of school. That day had come. The teacher was excited and anxious. He was about to finish an important work, receive his wages, and return to

his native home, — a place that he loved most dearly. The scholars were variously affected. Some were glad, — glad that they were about to be relieved from study. Others were sorry, — sorry that they could study and recite no more. Some of the young men and women had attended school for the last time, and, on that account, may have been more or less thoughtful and sad.

The closing hour arrived; and Mr. Branley, feeling constrained to give expression to some of his thoughts and emotions, addressed the school as follows:

“My dear young friends, we have had a pleasant time together. And we have been mutually serviceable. You have learned something from me, and I have learned something from you. A mutual stimulus was imparted, and progress has been constant and rapid. To continue our studies together would be delightful, and, no doubt, profitable; but that cannot be. We must leave the school; we must separate; we must go forth to our summer employments. These young men and stout boys, with few exceptions, will engage in the labors of the field and the forest, and, I hope, will be contented and happy, as well as industrious. These girls, older and younger, will have their appropriate work in the house and the garden; and, possibly, when haymaking comes, with its hurry and bustle, they may be called to pleasant work in the freshly-mown and fragrant meadows. Their hands will become a little harder and their cheeks a little browner; but, as I trust, their steps will be still elastic, and their hearts still buoyant and cheerful. Next summer, we may be sure, will be a busy one, and all will have something to do. Still, my young friends, you should not forget your books; you should not abandon your studies. Learn something every day. If you cannot study your school-book, then study the great book of Nature. If you cannot listen to me, or to any other

teacher, listen to the winds and birds, the trees and flowers, the clouds and stars. All things have voices and speak to us ; all things will teach us if we are willing to learn.

"My young friends, let us be contented with our lot. Let us be satisfied with country life. I make no account of this little village ; you are all country people. Let us not envy the people who live in cities and towns. I attended the Academy in M—— ; I have been several times in P—— ; and I know something about the people in those places. Some classes toil incessantly. The very poor suffer a continuous death. The rich have perpetual trouble, increasing their wealth, guarding their treasures, and conforming to the inexorable demands of fashion and folly. City people, it is true, have advantages ; but we have advantages which are great, and which we should very much prize. We live in a land flowing with milk and honey. No one among us suffers, or need suffer, the want of bread. We breathe pure air, and not air tainted by garbage and all manner of filth. We walk in the glorious sunshine, and not in the sombre shadows cast by huge brick walls. We live among trees, and flowers, and green fields, and wavy meadows, and murmuring streams. We have better morals, more social equality, — in fact, more real happiness than can be justly claimed by the people of the cities. Then, why may not the country improve indefinitely ? Why may we not have large, well-cultivated, productive farms ? Why may we not have beautiful homes, — homes provided with every convenience and comfort ? Why may we not, in the course of time, secure all literary and religious advantages ? And why may we not be intelligent, refined, even polished, and as happy as any people can be in this world ? I wish to say to these young men and women that, while living in the country, they need not meet one

serious disadvantage, and need not miss one real enjoyment of life.

"Some of you," he continued, speaking with deep solemnity, "look serious, even sad to-day. I might be able to guess a few of your thoughts. Your reflections may be these: 'The days of our childhood are gone forever. Even our school-days are past now. We must go out into the world and fight the great battles of life.' Well, to feel regrets about the past and anxieties about the future is perfectly natural. My friends, I am one of your class; I share in your regrets and anxieties. Let us be brave; let us have pure hearts; let us do right; let us do good. Let us carefully consult the Holy Bible, which 'is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.' Let us trust in wisdom and power which are infinitely greater than our own; and the God of our fathers and mothers will guide us, defend us, make us useful and happy, and prepare us for His everlasting kingdom.

"My dear young friends, I bid you farewell."

Sometimes, in the present day, the teacher seems to lose all interest in his school when the closing hour arrives. He becomes impatient, hurries the recitations, if there be any, scarcely speaks a kind word and gives no advice at all, dismisses abruptly, and hastens to the treasurer for his pay. Mr. Branley's spirit and conduct, as exhibited in the closing hours, deserve consideration. He manifested a deep interest, even a tender interest, in his school, purposely prolonged the recitations, uttered many kind words, advised as well as he was able, kept the scholars together as long as possible, and dismissed them in the most formal and affectionate manner.

The children did not leave the house with a rush and a shout, as they had been accustomed to do. In general, they walked away soberly and quietly. Mr. Branley, as was natural, and could hardly have been wrong, looked

for Flora, who was now walking towards the door, and who, at the same time, happened to turn slightly — perhaps looking for Mr. Branley. Her cheeks were certainly wet with tears; but there was the beautiful smile, — the beauty heightened by the tears, — the smile that had so often given sunshine and hope. The witchery, the power, of a smile is great. It is quite probable that Flora Calvert was not conscious that she smiled, and had not a suspicion that the expression of her face, whatever it might be, would have any serious result. Yet she smiled; and the beautiful and sweet expression of her face, while affording exquisite pleasure for the moment, caused Mr. Branley to think that he would see her again, and that the beautiful face, turning to him kindly, and smiling sweetly, would fill his heart with rapture. He knew that this young lady could be his scholar no more; but he was abundantly consoled by the reflection that she might be something better, something nearer and dearer, — a sweetheart.

Mr. Branley supposed that he had completed his work at Konneautt Lake. He was mistaken. The subscriptions had to be collected. There was a finishing work, as there had been a preparatory work. And who was authorized or required to do it? There was a collector of taxes, but there was no collector of school money. Some of the employers suggested that, as Mr. Branley had obtained the subscriptions, he was the man who should collect them. Others suggested that, as Mr. Branley had plenty of time, while the citizens were entering upon their spring work, and were very busy, he should cheerfully collect the subscriptions. A few hinted that, as the money was to go into Mr. Branley's pocket, he should be glad to have the opportunity to collect it. "I must earn my money a second time," Mr. Branley said to himself. As he could not return home without his money, he

agreed to accept the office of collector, and perform its unpleasant and unrequited labors. A few persons came forward voluntarily to Mr. Branley and paid him. Others on whom he called paid promptly. But more than one, when Mr. Branley approached, averted his face, continued at his work, and said not a word, until the teacher remarked, "I have called for your subscription." And more than one said, "You must wait awhile."

The teacher called upon Mr. Bradlock, — the man whose motion and speech had reduced his wages five or six dollars a month, and the man who had virtually declined to supply either board or lodging. Bradlock had no money. He did not say that he would ever have any. He said nothing, and, of course, made no promises. "That is manly," the teacher said to himself sarcastically. "Why, this man might have safely moved for a salary of fifty dollars a month, as he intends to pay nothing." The face of the young man flamed with anger; at the same time it expressed the profoundest contempt. But neither the show of anger, or expression of contempt, affected Bradlock in the smallest degree. He was insensible, or simply and absolutely indifferent, to what Branley and the whole world might think, or believe, or say, about him. The teacher never called upon Bradlock again, and, of course, never received a penny from the base and dishonest man.

He called upon Mr. Grove, and asked for his subscription. Mr. Grove looked up with apparent surprise.

"Why, Mr. Branley," he asked, "don't you remember that I paid you one day last week in Stafford's counting-room?"

"I remember," said the teacher, "that you promised to pay, but you did not pay anything at that time."

"I tell you, sir," exclaimed Grove, hotly, "that I paid you last week; and I must assure you that I will not pay a second time."

Here was another sample of coolness, and one that was really astounding. But the measure so coolly carried out, with so much affectation of hotness, was entirely successful. Mr. Branley, thinking that the statement so positively made, though wholly unsupported by his own recollections, might be true, and resolving that no man should impugn his honesty, said nothing more about his claim. And so Mr. Grove paid his subscription by a bold assertion, — that is, as every person believed in after-time, by a gross falsehood, of which he was perfectly conscious.

The teacher called upon Mr. Bayne. The old gentleman sat quietly in his room, doing nothing, and probably thinking of nothing. "Lady Hopeful Beldam" sat in her easy-chair, mending an old garment. The girls were playing with a toy of some kind. Mr. Branley saluted the parents, and spoke pleasantly to the children. Mrs. Bayne, probably thinking that he had called simply to say good-by, gave him a formal and hearty welcome. Mr. Bayne remained passive and quiet; he certainly dreamed of no danger or disturbance. The young man had felt uneasy respecting the *ballad*; but he now felt pretty sure that Lady Hopeful and her husband knew nothing about it. They conversed calmly and pleasantly, and treated Mr. Branley with marked civility, until he happened to speak about the *subscription*. That word caused an instantaneous and ominous change. Faces, particularly the lady's, gathered blackness. The children ceased playing. The air seemed to become thick and stifling. Mr. Bayne began to cough, to spit, to "hem and haw," most pitifully. Then Mrs. Bayne, with a look and tone of voice that were startling, remarked,

"I think Mr. Bayne has always been too ready with his pen."

Her words were pretty and innocent enough in themselves; but they contained a sting, — in fact, were de-

signed to kill two men or wound them badly. They touched Mr. Branley, and gave him a slight hurt. But they entered into the soul of Mr. Bayne, and produced a sort of agony. He coughed again, spit furiously, perspired, turned and writhed in his chair. He looked at his wife with imploring helplessness. Then, without turning or raising his head, but with a great, convulsive effort, he stammered, "After awhile — in a few days, Mr. Branley." The lady spoke again :

"Mr. Branley, you should not ask for the subscription. "Don't you know that our girls were often absent from school? Don't you know that we have no money? You should not expect anything from us."

"I do not expect anything," he remarked. "Of course, it is my duty to teach your children and look for no pay."

There might have been a sting in these words. But Mrs. Bayne did not feel the sting, if there was any; or she did not choose to notice the sarcasm; she just remarked, in a conciliatory way, "Mr. Bayne will do his best." She probably wished to relieve herself from Mr. Branley's presence. And, possibly, she began to sympathize with her husband in his great distress. She knew that he desired, above all things, to be let alone.

Mr. Branley retired. He resolved that he would never call again. And, doubtless, Mrs. Bayne, and her husband, too, if he was able to think about the matter, hoped that they would see him no more.

However, as Branley was leaving town one day, he happened to meet Mr. Bayne on the public road, just opposite the old tannery. Having so good an opportunity to press his claim, he ventured to speak about it. The spasms, the coughing, the spitting, the stammering, all returned, perhaps with some aggravation. At length the poor man was able to say,

"I have been waiting and waiting for something to turn up."

The young man had really pitied Mr. Bayne, and had, at one time, actually resolved to press his claim no farther. But this "waiting and waiting for something to turn up" made him indignant. He lost his patience and temper so far as to say, sharply,

"Mr. Bayne, you may wait through all eternity and nothing will turn up, unless you go to work and earn something."

Mr. Branley walked away. He did not wait to see whether his words had, or had not, any good effect. Mr. Bayne was not a very old man. Apparently he enjoyed good health. He was able, as people generally believed, to work and earn a living. The indignant youth's plain and sharp words, therefore, seemed to fit the man and the occasion. If there was a sting in them, was it not deserved and needed? After all, the young man did no good. How could he? Sharp words will not change a man's nature; or sharp words will not cure a habit that has been established for half a century.

Mr. Branley completed his work, or, rather, he ceased working when he saw that he could make no more collections. He reckoned that he had lost one-sixth of his salary. He felt disappointed and vexed. But he had some consolations. He was sure that he had made many friends. He had heard many persons say, warmly, "You will come back, Mr. Branley, and teach our school next winter." Nor was that kind invitation his principal source of pleasure. A sweet, delightful passion nestled in his heart. Was not that better than gold and silver in his purse? Was it not more than a compensation for all his toil and trouble? So the happy youth gathered up his earnings and his luggage, bid good-by to Konneautt Lake and the people, and went home.

CHAPTER XII.

SUMMER—ITS EMPLOYMENTS AND ITS PLEASURES.

WORK is the law of nature, the law of our existence. The law itself may be stated thus: "Work or die." The law, if not written upon our hearts, is written upon the external world. We may read it on the trees, the fields, the posts, the farm buildings and implements, the shops, the factories, the great ships at sea, and everywhere. The voices of nature proclaim the law. The wintry winds, roaring in the forest, sweeping over the fields, chilling the blood of man and beast, call us to work, saying, forcibly, "Build houses; protect yourselves and your flocks from the storm and the cold." The summer showers that fall so gently, the sunbeams that come so silently, the heat that pervades earth and air, giving life and growth to vegetation, say, "Work,—plant, cultivate, and secure harvests in their season." Animate nature, especially the insect world, speaks to us and commends industry. The bees work, building their beautiful combs, and gathering their stores from the field and the forest. The ants work, excavating their dwellings and diligently gathering their food.

It is true that a few persons—Mr. Bayne supplied an instance—do not work, and yet live awhile. But these few, violating the law, suffer more or less punishment. They spend their patrimony, if they have any, and sink into poverty. They forfeit the esteem of good people. They usually become the objects of unmitigated contempt and unsparing ridicule. They may suffer much from cold, and hunger, and nakedness. Finally, they are compelled

to look to disgusted friends or an angry public for the means of support. They are not, perhaps, allowed to perish for want of bread. But who is solicitous for their comfort? Who is anxious that they should live? Who sheds a tear when their bodies are laid in the grave?

The men and women who attempted to support their growing families, and to make comfortable homes, amidst the great forests of Pennsylvania, certainly found that the law of work had not been repealed, and that its sanctions had not been withdrawn. They had read in God's book, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." And they saw plainly that, if this was a prediction, they fulfilled it; and that, if this was a law, they rendered full obedience. The men chopped down trees, heaped and burnt enormous piles of logs and brush, plowed among stumps and roots, raised and harvested various crops, and attended to their cattle. The women milked the cows, made the butter, cooked the victuals, did much of the weaving and all of the sewing, worked in the garden, and attended to the children. It must be said that the early settlers, both men and women, had severe and exhausting labors, while they had, at first, a very limited supply of conveniences and comforts. Many families had no horses. A greater number had no wagons. No man owned a family carriage or a light vehicle of any kind. In many a case the owner of a horse did not own a saddle. Elderly women, as well as elderly men, often walked four or five miles to reach their places of worship. Young people, except on extraordinary occasions, made their journeys on foot. It may be said, at the same time, that the men and women who were healthy, industrious, and careful, always had bread, clothing, and shelter, and steadily improved their condition.

The summer which followed Mr. Branley's school was a busy one in the vicinity of Konneautt Lake. The sup-

plies which had been stored away the previous season — the hay, corn, wheat, potatoes — were nearly consumed, and the people were compelled, by the law or necessities of their condition, to resume the work of summer, — clear away forests, plow and sow, plant and cultivate, and raise new crops. And men generally aimed at the production of larger crops, as the existing supplies were so scanty, and the wants of their families appeared to be increasing every year.

What did Miss Flora Calvert do this summer? She lived and worked just like the other girls of the country. She was usually at home, and she was usually very busy. But it was observed that Flora was somewhat different from what she had been in previous years. She was not so cheery; not so sociable; not so fond of young, merry companions. She seemed to prefer solitude to society. Perhaps she had become a lover of nature. It is certain that, when her work permitted, and when there was no fresh book at hand, Flora walked forth, sometimes into the garden, sometimes into the meadow, often into the wooded valley. Not unfrequently she followed the brook, listened to its murmurs when the waters were low, listened to its roar when the waters were high, listened to the bees when they hummed among the linden blossoms, listened to the winds when they sung mournfully among the pines, watched the gay butterflies as they floated carelessly on the summer air, and stood, on a mossy bank, in the presence of nature and its beautiful things — in the presence of life and its mysteries. The girl returned home in due season, with flowers, mosses, and brackens in her hands, and a flower or two in her bonnet.

Flora never slighted her work; she never neglected a duty; she was never sullen or cross; but she was comparatively retiring and taciturn. While engaged with her work, and apparently gentle and amiable, she passed

hours in mental solitude, hardly speaking a word, and never indulging in song or laughter. What was Flora thinking or doing? Was she studying the great problems of life? Was she seriously reflecting that now, childhood and school days being over, she must assume the responsibilities of womanhood? Was she awed into habitual solemnity and silence by thoughts of the great, uncertain, momentous future? Or, was this girl "building castles in the air"? Was she dreaming while awake? Was she thinking of the past, — of the winter school, — of her young companions, — of the teacher? Was she picturing a rosy future — a scene in which herself, a noble lover and husband, and a beautiful cottage, were the central and conspicuous objects?

It was plain, indeed, that Flora's mind was absorbed by something apart from her work and the people around her. Sometimes, when perfectly silent, she seemed to be engaged, not only in thought, but in conversation. Was she living in an imaginary world, conversing with imaginary beings, or with absent persons who were conceived to be present? It is known that young people are apt to indulge in fancies, or to live in a world of their own. The habit is not commendable, — is not healthy for body or mind, — is not adapted to prepare one for the realities of life.

The girl's conduct, however, admitted of a solution which did not imply the existence of a bad habit or morbid state of mind. Flora was a clever story-teller; she was accustomed to gather nephews and nieces around her, and describe the travels and adventures of some wonderful man, woman, or child. The young folks always listened with the greatest interest; sometimes they laughed, and sometimes they cried; sometimes they jumped up, clapped their hands, and shouted, and sometimes they shuddered, looked aghast, and shrunk back, as if they

wished to hide. When a story was finished, the children almost invariably cried out, "Oh what a good one! won't you tell us another?" Flora had not read many stories; she had no literary aspirations; she never dreamed of writing a novel; yet she could tell a story—a very strange one, and produce a marvelous effect; and she commonly had a number of stories ready for use. May it not be supposed, then, that, at those times, when the girl seemed to be in a reverie, when her lips moved, but said nothing, she was inventing a story and preparing it for recital? And yet, it could not be clearly seen, or fully understood, why Flora should invent stories and reserve them in her memory. She could make a story and tell it at the same time; and the improvised tale appeared to be as good as any. Sometimes, as she began a story, with the little folks around her, she had no plan in her mind, and did not know what the next sentence would be. The next sentence, and the next, came readily; adventure followed adventure; the little folks listened eagerly, and they soon became so interested in the career of an imaginary hero or heroine that they forgot themselves and the whole real world.

Miss Calvert had no apparent reason for mopishness, melancholy, or trouble of any kind; she had fine health; she had a comfortable home; she was surrounded by very good friends; and pleasant neighbors were not far away. Then, the summer and fall afforded some recreations and amusements; the young people could visit friends; they could sail on the lake; they could ramble in the woods and gather nuts; they could enter the marsh and gather cranberries. Now and then, there was a "chopping" and "quilting." In all cases, a chopping and quilting happened at the same time, and had certain relations; the chopping was done in the woods; the quilting was done in the house. During the day or afternoon, a space three

or four hundred yards wide may have intervened between the choppers and quilters ; but, in the evening, the choppers invariably walked over this intervening space and joined the quilters ; then, work and supper being over, the young people engaged in their noisy but innocent plays, and had a pleasant time.

Why, then, should Flora Calvert have been unhappy ? Why should she have sought retirement ? Had her heart a craving which was not satisfied ? Certainly this girl had opportunities to please and satisfy herself. Tom McConnell was always near, offering his respectful and kind attentions. Many others, not far away, would have offered their homage and their hearts, if they had received the slightest encouragement. It is true that Stafford and Branley were not seen now, Stafford being away in the cities, and Branley being at home. But did Flora care for them ? Then, if these young men did leave a sort of vacuum, — in society, if not in her heart, — might it not have been filled, or more than filled, by a new-comer ? A young man, calling himself George Lambrun, came into the neighborhood. No one could tell why he came or why he stayed. But he was prepared for any kind of work or business. He was a carpenter, a millwright, a sawyer, a chopper, a hunter. He was tall and straight in person. He had good features, a dark complexion, and very dark, brilliant eyes. Some of the girls declared that he was very handsome. Others affirmed that he was homely. Some people, old and young, thinking that his face had a sinister expression, were disposed to avoid him. Lambrun was a bold and dashing fellow ; he commonly made a good impression at first ; and he was ready to see, and follow up, any advantage gained by his good looks, boldness, or luck. He saw Flora Calvert at a party, and became at once an open and professed admirer. He saw her frequently. Flora treated him civilly, just as she

treated almost every one ; while the young man, regarding her civility as something special, was encouraged to make a formal assault upon the citadel of her heart. He had no apparent success.

Flora Calvert was a mystery to her friends and neighbors. Perhaps she was a mystery to herself. Perhaps a young girl — one that is active, thoughtful, inquisitive, indulging in romance, watching showy phantoms, peering into the future, perhaps varying hourly in her moods — is always a mystery — at least a most interesting object — to the philosophical observer.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VISIT.

ONE morning in June, when Nature appeared in her most beautiful robe, Flora Calvert walked into the garden to work a few minutes. She wore her ordinary dress ; but her ordinary dress was always neat and pretty. As usual, she had the white collar ; and her hair was arranged in braids and waves. A band encircled her waist. Many flowers were in bloom, or preparing to exhibit their charms. There was not a great variety of flowers, but there was a profusion of certain kinds — tulips, sweet-williams, peonies, roses, and others. Rose-bushes, comprising several varieties, formed a novel and pretty circle, a few feet in diameter. Flora, this time, did not engage promptly in the execution of her task — the extirpation of weeds from a bed of onions. Was she not quite excusable ? Surely the bright morning was to be enjoyed. Surely the beautiful things around her were to be seen and admired. Surely it was proper that Flora, now in early maidenhood,

should look at Nature and enjoy life. For the time, while her senses were regaled with the beauty and fragrance of flowers, she was too happy to think of her work. She walked around, examined the buds and flowers, plucked a sweet-william, admired its name, experimented with its perfume, plucked some tulips, and planned a bouquet for the parlor. She approached the circle of rose-bushes, noticed the buds that were bursting into the perfection of beauty, then surveyed the roses that were in fresh, full bloom, then glanced at others whose fading glory reminded her that man himself, being as a flower of the field, must soon fade and pass away. Presently, the girl plucked two superb roses, attached one to the front of her collar, and, removing her bonnet, placed the other among the waves of her dark hair. Thus adorned, she stepped into the space enclosed by the rose-bushes, placed herself in the centre of the rosy circle, and looked towards the house, perhaps expecting that some one, coming out, would see and admire her position and her ornaments. She was startled, for a person whom she had not seen, but who stood almost at her side, pronounced her name :

"Flora !"

She looked around hastily, and saw Mr. John Branley.

"Flora," repeated Mr. Branley, as he stood with his hands on the paling, his face expressing unbounded admiration and pleasure. "You are at home I see — among the flowers. What a beautiful home you have, and how suitable ! The home fits you, and you fit the home. Where should Flora dwell if not among the roses ? Well, you always loved flowers. Your mother was endowed with a wonderful prescience, or made a happy guess, when she resolved that your name should be Flora."

Was this flattery ? Not at all. Was it an unmeaning rhapsody ? No. It was just the sincere expression of the young man's real thoughts and feelings. It is true that

he never had previously addressed such language to Flora Calvert, but the circumstances were new and exciting. He had not seen the girl for two or three months; he found her unexpectedly; he saw her in a most interesting place—her home of flowers. He saw, too, as he thought, a decided increase of personal charms, at least in some respects, as if work had been better for her than study. Her person had a greater fulness and symmetry than formerly; her cheeks had a deeper color; her eyes had a more startling brilliancy; and, oh, that smile! sweet before, but sweeter now. There Flora stood, rivaling the roses in bloom, beauty, and sweetness. What could the young man do but give expression to his feelings of admiration and delight? Branley would gladly have done more than use fine words. If it had been his privilege, he would have sprung over the fence, clasped the girl in his arms, and kissed her rosy cheek.

"Do you like flowers, Mr. Branley?" the girl asked.

"Yes," he replied, "particularly *one*."

What was this? Had Mr Branley really become a flatterer? Was he deliberately indulging in the use of extravagant words? Flora was not offended—perhaps she was pleased; but without seeming to notice the compliment, or whatever it was, she remarked,

"Mr. Branley, if you are fond of flowers, go around to the gate and come in, and get a better view of our beauties."

Branley walked hurriedly to the gate, and entered the garden; but before he looked at a flower he caught Flora's hand and held it awhile. Her hand, he noticed, was a little browner and a little harder than it had been in the winter; but he was sure that it retained its electric power, for it gave him a most delightful thrill. Flora forgot her work or neglected it; and Mr. Branley had not come to weed an onion-bed. So, the two walked

around, chatted gaily, and pretended to look at the flowers. However, they looked at nothing beyond themselves. Just then the splendors of the morning, the charms of nature, the glory of the world, were overlooked or forgotten. The young man and his companion were wrapt up, absorbed, lost — at least, one of them was — in present, actual happiness.

At length, the happy pair entered the house. Mr. Branley found the old lady in good health and spirits, and received from her a hearty welcome. Mrs. Calvert was a woman of fine appearance and pleasing manners. She was kind and motherly, and, indeed, had been a mother to Mr. Branley when he lived among strangers. But she was no schemer or manager, and probably had never said a word or done a thing to aid her daughters in the matter of courtship and marriage. She set before them a good example of womanly virtues; she gave them good advice in regard to matters and things in general; but affairs of the heart she left to themselves and to Providence. This good lady treated Mr. Branley, during his present visit, with her usual civility and kindness.

Branley spent several delightful hours with Mrs. Calvert and the young folks. He dined with the family. He engaged Miss Flora's company for an excursion on the lake. Late in the afternoon he started for Evansburgh.

The young man had a wonderful experience. He scarcely knew whether he was walking on the surface of the earth or floating through the air. He scarcely knew whether he was in the world or in Elysium. A thousand soft, sweet voices chanted around him. All space was filled with sunshine, beauty, music, and fragrance. As far as emotion was concerned he was conscious of nothing, knew nothing, but ecstasy. Life, existence itself, seemed to be the consciousness of intense, indescribable

pleasure. Yet all this may be stated in one word — love. Whatever disappointed or cynical people may say, love is a great, beneficent power, filling the heart with the purest and best of earthly joys, — filling even the external world with warmth and splendor. In fact, without it, the earth would be a desert, or something worse, and life would be a burden and a sorrow.

The happy youth reached Evansburgh, spoke to the acquaintances whom he happened to meet, took a rapid survey of the lake and its surroundings in their summer aspect, engaged skiffs and canoes for the excursion, and then rambled awhile in the fields and woods, thinking and thinking. "Oh, if I were a painter!" he said to himself. "Oh, if I could paint a landscape, with a house and a garden in the centre, and a lady in the garden! Oh, if I could paint Flora Calvert, standing among the flowers! If I could paint, I would make a beautiful picture. But I cannot paint; I can hardly make a rough drawing."

His mind was occupied with regrets; but, happily, it soon took a turn, and Branley said to himself, "There is another kind of painting that is very good. *Word-painting* may answer every necessary purpose; and can I not do a little painting of that kind? I will try; I will try."

Next morning Branley left his room, left the town, left the highway, entered the forest, and advanced towards the great marsh, formed by the waters which flowed from Konneautt Lake. The marsh was inhabited by reptiles, muskrats, and other creatures. It was the source of fogs which were not agreeable — perhaps of miasmas which were not healthy. It had no attractions in the month of June. Why did the young man walk into the dark forest? Why did he approach the gloomy, solitary marsh? Why did he seek a strip of land projecting into the marsh, — dry and smooth enough, but skirted by pools of black water and

clumps of alder and bramble? Why did he enter into the very heart of this lonely, dreary, unattractive region? He was in quest of absolute solitude and silence; he was seeking inspiration; and he hoped to find all in the depth of primeval nature. He desired, with all advantages, external and internal, to concentrate his skill and energies upon a *picture*.

The young man found a place that suited. He had not a glimpse of a farm or clearing. He saw not a mark left by the axe. He saw nothing except trees, bushes, flags, and water. He heard nothing except the occasional chirp of a bird, and that did no harm. He stood in deep shadow. Only now and then, here and there, a sunbeam secured a passage through the dense foliage and reached the ground. The youth, now an amateur artist, sat down on a mossy bank, reclined against a tree, took paper and pencil from his pocket, threw himself into a reverie, then into a trance, conjured up all the beautiful things of the world, particularly flowers, and more particularly still, a woman — a young, beautiful, blushing, sweet maiden; and then the artist began to paint, that is, in words. He painted and painted; that is, he wrote or scribbled, crossed out words, interlined, added verse to verse, and transcribed the whole. Hours were passed in executing the self-imposed task. At length it was finished; the artist rose up, put the picture, or whatever it was, in his pocket, and returned to the village.

A certain question demanded a speedy settlement. Mr. Branley was pretty well satisfied with his picture, and he was fully determined to present it to Flora. "When shall I present it?" was the question which now pressed itself on his mind and gave him some perplexity. At first he thought he would defer the presentation till the excursion should be over, and he should be ready to start for home; but, feeling very anxious to see

the effect of his artistic labors, he concluded to present the painting next day. He stayed another night at Evansburgh. He rose early in the morning, corrected his word-painting or literary work, wrote a fair copy, went to Calvert's, said a word or two about the prospective excursion, put the copy into Flora's hands, and hastily withdrew.

Flora was agitated now. She had never received a paper from Mr. Branley before, and, therefore, fully expected an important development. Was she sensible that she had encouraged him to make a declaration? Had she desired such a thing? Or was she afraid of it? Her heart fluttered; she trembled exceedingly; the paper almost fell from her hand. As the artist or poet anticipated, Flora ran, not into the garden, but up-stairs. She entered her bed-chamber, closed the door, sat down, unfolded the paper, and read the following poem or ballad:—

TO FLORA.

O couldst thou know my love for thee,
My love so strong and true!
O couldst thou give thy love to me,
And be as faithful too!
Thou art in all my dreams by night,—
In all my thoughts by day;
Come, then, make life and nature bright,
Dear Flora, come away.

O let this purest bliss be mine—
To view thee so complete;
To see a thousand charms combine,
A thousand virtues meet.
Why should such wondrous worth and bloom
In lone seclusion stay?
Come forth, leave solitude and gloom,
Sweet Flora, come away.

For thee the tinted buds expand,
For thee the lilies call :
Among the roses thou wilt stand,
Most beautiful of all.
Come, seek the fairest earthly scene ;
Come in thy choice array ;
Come, be an honored, happy queen ;
Bright Flora, come away.

To shine, but not in festive halls,
Among the rich and proud ;
To rule, not as a belle enthralled
A light and foolish crowd ;
To do a woman's noble part,
With loving, gentle sway ;
To reign in one enraptured heart,
Dear Flora, come away.

Come, then, in early, rosy youth,
With qualities divine —
Love, wisdom, purity, and truth,
And be forever mine.
Yes, dear, dear girl, thou must comply,
Distinctly, promptly say,
"I will," nor let me always cry,
"Sweet Flora, come away."

E'en should thy mother say, "Beware!"
I'll win thee from her side ;
And thou, my sweetly-blushing fair,
Will be my lovely bride.
See! many, many guests are here,
To grace our bridal day ;
The holy man will soon appear, —
Dear Flora, come away.

"What does this mean?" Flora earnestly inquired in her own mind. "Is it a declaration of love and a proposal of marriage? Or is it simply a poetic compliment?" She soliloquized further: "This is poetry, not serious, trustworthy prose. Poetry has its own license and its own language. Poetry is designed to please — that is all. Prose is usually written for a serious purpose. If Mr. Branley had written in prose, and used

only half of the strong, loving words which he employs in this poem, I should have concluded that he was offering me his heart and trying to win mine. As he writes in the form of poetry, I conclude that he simply wishes to compliment me and give me a little pleasure."

The girl's excitement passed away. She had, indeed, something to employ her thoughts awhile, — something to excite emotions that were not at all disagreeable. But as she believed that no declarations had been made, and that no important question demanding a speedy and final answer had been presented, she really had nothing to disturb her equanimity. She folded the paper and placed it in her trunk. When Mr. Branley met Flora next day, she was precisely the same girl whom he had been accustomed to see; she was calm, unembarrassed, amiable, and smiling. He saw plainly that his poetry had not offended her, but he was unable to see that it had touched her heart, and won for him any special regard.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXCURSION.

ON Thursday morning, according to arrangement, fifteen or twenty young people assembled on the bank of the lake. Mr. Branley, having been a teacher, was called by his surname. All others were addressed by their christian names, or names that were familiar. Some of the names may be given. There was a Charley, a Jim, a George; and there were two or three Johns, besides Mr. B. There was a Kate, a Caroline, a Sarah, a Jenny, a Flora; besides, there were two or three Marys. Henry Stafford and Tom McConnell were not present, Stafford being absent from

home, and McConnell being slightly ill. There never was a gayer company; perhaps there never was a happier one. The day was as fine and agreeable as summer and the climate could afford. The scenery was as beautiful as could be found. The young people had excellent health, and, as far as can be told, no troubles whatever. It is true that they had little finery. They made no display of grandeur, and but little show of fashion. In later years, the parties that visited the lake, and had a sail, were, in many cases, both fashionable and grand, the ladies, at least on special occasions, flashing with jewelry, wearing rich, glossy silk, and carrying trains of enormous length and breadth. These young people wore very cheap and plain clothes, yet every young man had garments that suited the weather and the occasion, and every young woman had a dress that was indisputably neat and becoming. Almost every girl wore a white, embroidered cape, a nice ruff or collar, a bonnet graceful in form, neat in workmanship, and picturesque and gay with bows and pendants. Not a ring or brooch could be seen. But these maidens had a beautiful substitute for jewelry: buds and flowers adorned their hair and their bonnets; buds and flowers occupied the place of pins and brooches. Flora Calvert wore a magnificent rose. Such was the dress of these country girls. Would not such a dress be picturesque and pretty to-day? Would not a bonnet — a real bonnet — look better than a bit of something placed over the brows, or on the back of the head? Would not white stockings and morocco shoes look infinitely better than a long, filthy train?

Talking, laughing, shouting, the excursionists prepared to enter their sailing-vessels. They had two skiffs and three canoes. Skiffs were just coming into use, and, as very few existed, canoes were required to supply the needed accommodations. The skiffs were new, pretty,

convenient and safe. The canoes were long, slender and light. They could be easily moved, but were liable to rock, and were not just perfectly convenient and safe for the girls. Sails were not used on this occasion. The skiffs were propelled with oars, and the canoes were moved with paddles.

Mr. Branley took possession of a skiff, and placed Flora at the prow. Another pair followed and seated themselves. There was a general rush, and, with much excitement and laughter, and a little screaming as the canoes began to roll, all secured places aboard the little crafts. Charley Calvert, occupying the second skiff, with Caroline at the prow and Jenny at the stern, began to move forward.

"Halt!" shouted Branley, who was recognized as captain or admiral. "The royal barge must be in front; the queen must lead; fall back, Charley." Then, turning to the young man who sat near, he issued an order: "Handle the oars, George."

The subaltern obeyed promptly, and handled the oars vigorously; the royal yacht, or whatever it was, darted forward and led the fleet. Branley had now reached the highest pitch of enthusiasm; probably he had reached the acme of human felicity. He stood erect, waved his hat, and shouted. The circumstances were truly auspicious. He was sailing on a beautiful water, a beautiful world around him, a beautiful girl before him, her face flushed with excitement and radiant with smiles. And was not this beautiful, smiling, happy girl, his own? No rival was present to dispute his claims, or give him the least annoyance. No wonder that he was excited, wild, delirious. But there was "method in his madness." He had provided a long, slender pole, designing to use it for a fishing-rod, a mast, or a flag-staff. Just now, he needed a flag-staff, for he held a flag in his hand. He attached

the flag, elevated and unfurled it, to catch the gentle breeze, and become a conspicuous object. Then, looking at the young folks in the other crafts, all moving nearly abreast, he shouted,

"Behold the royal banner!"

Having a sudden recollection of Queen Cleopatra and her magnificent vessel, Branley had almost said, "This is Queen Cleopatra in her royal barge; give her your homage." But he restrained himself; for, recalling the fact that the Egyptian queen was very bad as well as very beautiful, he began to fear that he might commit a sort of outrage upon innocence and virtue, and insult the queen who sat before him, and who, he was sure, deserved the love and homage of all good people.

"Konneautt Lake may be proud to-day," said the admiral. "Never before has it borne so much beauty and chivalry."

"Except when it bore the dusky Indians, skimming the water in their bark canoes," responded Charley.

"Charley," inquired the admiral, speaking sternly, "are you an admirer of birch canoes and dusky maidens? Be careful, if you are not ready for a discharge. The man who does not properly admire these elegant crafts, and these fair ladies, cannot be retained in my service. Past ages cannot, in any respect, equal the present."

"Captain, I revoke my opinions," Charley said, meekly. "I now declare, positively, that crafts so elegant, and ladies so fair, were never seen on Konneautt Lake, or any other lake. The fact is," Charley continued in low tones, "I would change my opinions a thousand times, or accept anything you suggest, even your newest philosophy, absurd as it may be, rather than be discharged to-day."

"Charley, you are a changeling," Sarah remarked, dryly. "Your opinions are worth nothing. We don't care what you think of the skiffs and ladies, or of the new philosophy, whatever it may be."

"Oh, excuse him," cried Charley's sister. "The youth is re-forming his opinions, and you see that they are becoming sensible. Under the care and direction of his able instructors, he will soon be right on all points, and, with the present aid continued, he will waver no more."

"We will do our duty," said Caroline.

"Flora," inquired Mr. Branley, "of what does this voyage remind you? Does it recall the voyage of life? The voyage of life, it is said, has, usually, a most auspicious beginning, the weather being calm and delightful, the waters placid, the scenery varied and charming, the vessel gliding along smoothly and safely, the voyager having great present enjoyment, and the most cheering anticipations. Flora, this water looks like a beautiful river. See the green fields on the eastern shore. See the great evergreen forest on the western. See the white houses on a northern point. Flowers must bloom all along the margin of the water, and songsters must fill the woods with melody. Our voyage is most delightful, but, Flora, how will it end? Are there rapids, cataracts, and whirlpools before us?"

"There are no dangers before us," said Flora. "We are sailing on a lake, not on a river. Besides, we are sailing up, not down."

"True," remarked Branley. "But, Flora, what would you say in regard to the other voyage—the voyage of life? We are now in the early part of that voyage. So far, the voyage has been pleasant to me, and, I think, very pleasant to you. To-day I find the voyage intensely delightful, and, I trust, your experience is the same. What is before us? Storm, shipwreck, and destruction, or a smooth sea, safety, and happiness?"

"I do not know, and I scarcely wish to know," replied the young woman.

"Flora, I am thinking about matters and things con-

nected with the voyage — landmarks, capes, islands, harbors, passengers.”

“Perhaps you are doing wrong. It would be unwise to think anxiously about the future.”

“Then we may be happy to-day — happy in the first part of life’s voyage.”

“Certainly. Why should you anticipate evil, Mr. Branley, and be miserable?”

“Oh, miss, I am anticipating good, and so am now very happy. I regard this delightful voyage as an emblem of the voyage of life. This glorious day, this smooth, shining water, this pleasant breeze that fans us, this gliding, agreeable motion, and this delightful companionship, give me an assurance that the voyage of life will be prosperous and happy in the future.”

“You are wrong again, Mr. Branley. Many a future day will not be like this day. Many a future day may be, as many a past day has been, dark and stormy, and yet may be, just as much as this day, an emblem of life. The truth is, Mr. Branley, life has light and shadow, calm and storm, good and evil. We should be prepared for whatever may come. Meanwhile we should enjoy whatever kind Heaven offers, and be happy.”

“You are a wise girl,” said the young man, “and I wish that you would always be my teacher.”

“As you taught me awhile, perhaps I should teach you awhile,” said Flora, laughing. “But do you not ask or wish for too much? I do not owe the service of my whole life. Besides, I might grow weary in teaching, and you might grow weary in learning. Be just and reasonable, Mr. Branley.”

The conversation, though varied with pleasantries, had become rather too serious for the time and the circumstances. However, Mr. Branley had a serious object in view. He wished to test, in a new and extraordinary

way, the mental powers of his companion. He wished to measure her intellectual resources. The voyage on the lake gave him an opportunity to speak of the voyage of life, and, more or less indirectly, to state problems relating to human life, experience, and destiny. He purposely presented narrow or partial views, and mixed things which are distinct, to try her powers of perception and discrimination. He was intensely gratified. He felt the profoundest respect for the young girl who sat before him. Mr. Branley had previously thought that Flora's mental powers were good: he now believed that they were very superior. Indeed, he began to have a suspicion, if not a conviction, that this young girl, leaving him to flounder in the shallows, could explore, with ease and safety, the depths of theology and philosophy. Presently, the serious topic was changed to something of a lighter and gayer nature.

The skiffs and canoes suddenly changed their direction, swept into a beautiful cove, floated among water-docks and water-lilies, and, at last, struck the shore, where the primitive forest stood in its glory, and where birds and beasts were seldom disturbed by the approach of man. The party discovered a smooth bank, pretty well covered with spring berries and gay flowers. Some gathered berries, some gathered flowers, while some began to talk about the place, its inhabitants, and its visitors.

"The naiads, when they wish to leave the water, come and repose here," said Mr. Branley, who had read something about mythology.

"The fairies come and dance here," said Jim, who had learned from his father and mother how the fairies behaved in Ireland.

"Sing, or whistle, or show your pretty faces, or do something, gentlemen," cried Jenny, "and bring the naiads and fairies here; I want to see them."

"Oh, you would be sorry if they should come," George observed. "Why, if they should appear, we would run away from you and follow them."

"You must be easily caught," Sarah remarked, in her dryest manner. "Naiads are ugly fish, and fairies are no better than witches."

"Friends," exclaimed Jim, "let us leave their dominions before they do us any harm."

"Why, Jim," responded Charley, "if we take your advice, we shall just run from one danger into another. If we escape from the artifices of the naiads and fairies, we shall be caught in the snares of these girls, and be led away into miserable captivity. Jim, can you tell me which would be the more cruel tyrants, the girls or the naiads and fairies?"

"All are very cruel and to be dreaded," replied Jim.

"Well, gentlemen," Flora remarked, "if you are alarmed, run into the woods and take refuge with the porcupines; or, which would be better, with the owls in their hollow trees; you would be safe there, and, besides, would have wise and suitable company. We can easily manage the skiffs and go home."

Flora, having shot her arrow, ran down the hill, and was closely followed by all the girls. The active and mischievous creatures made an effort to move the skiffs and leave the gentlemen on the shore. They had a measure of success; but some, beginning to relent, proposed terms of adjustment and peace; and the young men, professing regret for their past misconduct, and promising better conduct for the future,—at the same time dexterously using the crafts left behind,—succeeded in regaining their places and also the favor of their fair companions. As noon was approaching, and luncheon was to be eaten, the skiffs and canoes were directed towards Mount Hope, as a certain place was called by the party.

Mount Hope was the extreme point of a promontory or strip of land which reached far into the lake. The point had considerable height, and in the time of high water was converted into an island. The elevated part was eighty or a hundred yards in length and fifty or sixty yards in breadth. Mount Hope was then, and perhaps is yet, an attractive and delightful place. It had a fine grove, which was a great ornament, and which often afforded shade and shelter to the birds. Flowers and mosses grew on the high ground, and shells and smooth, variegated stones lay on the beach. Mount Hope was just in its natural condition, the hand of man having neither marred or improved its appearance. Almost the whole expanse of water could be seen from the highest ground. This hill or island has always been a favorite place for picnics. Excursionists, provided with luncheon, always stop here; and if the party embraces children and young people, there is invariably a frolic among the trees and shrubbery.

Branley and his companions reached Mount Hope, took their baskets in their hands, stepped on the beach, and ascended the small mountain. Having reached the summit, they stood a minute or two, and looked around.

"This is Elysium," said Mr. Branley.

"No, this is Eden," remarked Kate.

"You are right," exclaimed Charley, addressing the girl. "Adam and Eve lived here, and you know we are their descendants. We are just coming into the rightful possession of our property." Charley paused, looked around at his inheritance, then deliberately surveyed the girls, and then, speaking in a slow, careful manner, remarked, "I have always understood that Eve was beautiful, but I believe that some of her daughters far excel her."

The gentlemen looked around to see who was blushing. Their eyes settled on Caroline.

"Let us stay here," said George. "We can't find a better place."

"Oh, before you conclude to stay," cried Jim, "I want to look at the provisions. How long will they last?"

"Provisions! Nonsense, Jim!" exclaimed Charley. "We shall need no provisions; we shall feast on beauty; we shall be nourished with love. If, indeed, we should happen to get hungry, we can gather berries, or we can catch a fish, and roast it here, where the visitors make their fire."

"Charley," remarked his sister, "you have lived all your life where there was beauty and love, and I never knew you to pass a day without eating and drinking. Beauty and love may have done you good, but you always required an addition of bread and butter, with an occasional supply of beef and potatoes. You cannot live on beauty and love, Charley."

"Well," said Charley, quietly, "perhaps Flora is right. At any rate, we shall not begin our experiment to-day. Let us have our luncheon."

Charley's motion was promptly seconded. The cloth was spread; the baskets were emptied; the provisions were properly distributed; and the young folks, or most of them, sat down on the grass and leaves. The young men feasted on beauty — also on bread and cheese, while they were happy to hear Flora remark that their conduct was sensible. The young maidens, having failed to find anything like ambrosial diet, partook cheerfully of the ordinary food of mortals.

Paradise proved to be an interesting topic, and was again introduced.

"Well, Mr. Branley," said George, "if you find your paradise here, I believe I shall go over to the mainland and set up a rival establishment. Don't you see that pretty cottage on the green hill, the great forest a little back?"

Branley looked, and saw the house which he had first observed the previous October, when he stood on the isolated hill and took a general survey of the lake and its shores.

"That is a pretty place indeed," Mr. Branley remarked; "and, with good company, would be a charming home."

"Let me tell you," said Jim, addressing George, "if you want to make a paradise over there, you must drive out the present inhabitants, as the children of Israel drove out the Canaanites. May I give you a bit of my experience? Two or three weeks ago, when I was up here fishing, I noticed that pretty house standing on the grassy knoll, and this fancy seized me: There must be a pretty girl living at that pretty place; it can't be otherwise. I must call and see her, and, perhaps, fall in love with her. It would be romantic and delightful to come up on the lake every Saturday afternoon in order to see my sweetheart. It would be almost as romantic and pleasant to follow a path through the hemlocks with this object in view. Well, George, — observe I am telling a secret, — I called at that nice house perched on the green hill, and I saw the girl, and I saw her mother. O George, don't ask me to describe them! But I say you must drive out the present inhabitants."

"If Stafford were here," George remarked, "he would say that paradise is neither here nor there. He would say it is farther up the lake, — up at McLean's, where you see the large farm and white house. Betsey lives there."

Flora and several other girls listened to George's talk. Perhaps some of them questioned the accuracy of his knowledge.

"If Tom McConnell were here," Jim remarked, "he would say that paradise is down below Long Point, at Siver's. Nancy lives there."

Flora and Tom's sister, Caroline, heard Jim's state-

ment, and knew very well that he blundered. The sister felt that the blunder ought to be noticed and corrected.

"Quit guessing," said Caroline, frowning. "You are getting wild. If Tom McConnell were here he would say no such thing."

Mr. Branley, of course, had a share in the talk and in the merriment. At the same time, he was commander-in-chief, overlooking and managing everything. He gave the company full time for the repast, and for the customary frolic; and when the proper moment had arrived, he rose and said,

"Ladies and gentlemen, let us go aboard."

The party gathered up the baskets and other goods, and began to run down the hill. Meanwhile the young men determined to fasten the skiffs and canoes together for the remaining part of the voyage, and, while engaged with their withes and cords, the girls stood on the beach, looking at the shells and pretty stones, and chatting.

"Are your flowers fading?" inquired Jane, speaking to Caroline.

"Not much," the other replied; "I wet them now and then."

"What a beautiful rose Flora wears!" exclaimed one of the Marys.

"I'll warrant Mr. Branley thinks it beautiful," Sarah remarked.

"Yes," interposed Jane, "and I'll warrant there is something he thinks far more beautiful than the rose."

"What is that?" inquired several.

"The wearer — the girl that wears the flower."

All heard the last remark; and two persons blushed this time. Of course, the two that blushed were Mr. John Branley and Miss Flora Calvert.

The crafts were fastened together, the canoes in the middle, a skiff on each side. One oar of each skiff and

several paddles of each canoe could be used to give motion to the fleet. The admiral commanded all to go aboard. The girls resumed their places, and the young men, as far as was practicable, handled the oars and paddles. The flotilla began to move. At first, its course was toward Evansburgh. Presently, it seemed to take a very circuitous route. Then, for a while, it seemed to turn and move in almost every direction. When the fleet had reached deep water, some of the young men, having nothing else to do, began to jump about as if they were mad, skipping from a canoe to a skiff and from a skiff to a canoe, endangering the fastenings, rocking the vessels, and causing the girls to scream.

"What brave girls!" exclaimed one of the young men, speaking, of course, ironically.

"We are not foolhardy, like you," replied Jenny; "and foolhardy people are not really brave. Would you have courage enough to move if one of us fell overboard?"

"Oh, yes," cried several; "we would save you."

"Caroline," inquired Mr. Branley, "if you should fall into the water, who would jump in and save you?"

"I cannot say," replied Caroline; "but Flora knows who would jump in if she happened to fall overboard. Ask her, Mr. Branley."

"Flora," said Mr. Branley, laughing, "Caroline says you know something of an interesting nature. We are all anxious to know it too. If you were to fall into the water, who would jump in and save you?"

"Why, nobody," replied Flora, promptly. "It would be very, very foolish for a fellow to wet his clothes when I could so easily save myself."

"But, Flora, suppose you were in real danger, would not some of us jump in and help you?"

"I think not; you would be too careful of your own precious lives to run any risk."

"I am thinking of another question, Flora. If you should fall into the sea from the deck of a large ship, and a young man, at very great risk, should jump after you and be the means of saving your life, would you marry him?"

"I cannot tell you," the girl answered. "I would admire his courage and be profoundly grateful for his generous deed; but I would have to look at other qualities and things, and be satisfied, before I should think of marriage. I do not know what I would do at last; but I know what the story says."

"What does the story say?" cried several. "Tell us the story."

As Flora was known to be a great story-teller, the young people probably thought that she would just make and tell a story to suit the occasion; but she was really thinking of a story which she had read in the newspapers—a story which is apt to be reproduced in one form or another.

"The story," said Flora, "is this: A lady on shipboard had four lovers. She wished to marry one of them, but not being able to make a choice, she referred the matter to the captain. He advised her to jump overboard, and marry the man who should rescue her. She accepted his advice, and jumped overboard; and, behold! three of her lovers instantly plunged into the sea. When all had been brought on deck, the lady was as much puzzled as before, and again sought the captain's advice. 'Marry the dry one,' he said; and she did."

"One thing is certain," Mr. Branley remarked; "men and women may exhibit great heroism, and perform most generous deeds, and yet fail to make pleasant companions in married life."

"How do you know all that?" asked Jenny. "Do you speak from experience, Mr. Branley?"

"Oh, no, Miss Jenny," he replied. "I have learned nothing from experience. I have learned a little from observation. And I have, perhaps, learned more from a story."

"Tell the story," shouted many voices.

Mr. Branley was thinking of a story which, like Flora's, is apt to make a fresh appearance now and then. He believed that it was, at least, philosophically true, or presented a phenomenon which often occurs in real life. He proceeded to tell the story :

"A ship was wrecked at sea, the boats were lost, and the crew and passengers were in great peril. It was believed that a good swimmer had a chance of reaching the shore, but that the women, and all unable to swim, were doomed to certain destruction. A young couple, recently married, stood on the deck of the sinking vessel. The husband was an expert swimmer, and, therefore, had the means of saving himself; but he clung to his wife, and she clung to him. He clasped her in his arms, declaring that they would sink and perish together. Unexpectedly, all were saved. A few weeks afterwards, the loving, devoted pair had a quarrel about some petty matter, parted in anger, and never met again."

"We'll take a different course," said Jane. "We'll not pretend to be brave, for I am sure we are not. Each one will save himself or herself, if possible. Then I must say that it would be better that one should be saved than two drowned, and better that two should be drowned than two saved to fight and bite afterwards."

The young men listened and laughed, but said nothing.

"Bravery is a good thing when needed," remarked Flora. "A good temper is a good thing all the time. In my opinion, bravery has much value, but a sweet temper has more. Unfortunately, it is easier to be brave than sweet-tempered."

The young men listened, but they did not laugh. Nor did they speak. However, they had some thoughts; and the leading thought was probably this: "Flora is a sensible girl."

The young people were certainly not in a hurry to return home. They moved back and forward, changed their course, rested, fanned themselves, talked unceasingly and laughed pretty often. They entered another pretty cove, which was now pleasantly shaded by the great hemlocks. They stopped awhile, and enjoyed the coolness of the place. They attempted to catch a fish, and failed. They approached the shore, searched the mossy bank, peered among the trees, but saw no naiads, or fairies, or witches, or porcupines, or owls, or anything that could either amuse or alarm them. Warned by the position of the sun behind the great dark forest, they separated their crafts, moved out into the lake, and then steadily pursued one course.

The party reached the shore at the proper time, separated, and, excepting Mr. Branley, went to their respective homes. Next day, Mr. Branley, delighted with his visit, carrying with him a thousand pleasant memories, left the neighborhood. At Mr. Calvert's, the old life continued without any visible change.

CHAPTER XV.

ANOTHER VISIT.

WHEN September came, John Branley thought that he had some business at Konneautt Lake, and he thought that the business required immediate attention. His professed business was to engage a winter school. His

real business was to see Flora Calvert. Now, Mr. Branley was a young man who never neglected his business, and never postponed the performance of a present duty.

One afternoon, John Branley, being, as he may have pretended, on his way to Evansburgh, happened to stop at Mrs. Calvert's. As he approached the house he looked into the garden; but he saw no roses, and he saw no lady. He walked into the house, met the old lady and received the usual welcome, but did not see Flora. He learned that Charley and his sister had gone to the lake, and might not return before night. Refusing to sit down, he hurried away towards Evansburgh. He hoped that he would meet the young folks returning; but he did not. He reached the town, walked along the street, spoke to acquaintances as he met them, and looked for Flora, but failed to see her. He continued his walk until he reached the bank of the lake, then paused, and looked, not at the expanse of water, but at the street and houses directly in front. No lady was visible anywhere. Suddenly, he heard the notes of a flute. The music was soft and sweet enough, but it startled the young man. His eyes instantly glanced over the lake. He saw a skiff three or four hundred yards from the shore; and he saw, plainly, that the skiff contained two persons, a gentleman and a lady. "Who are they?" was his mental inquiry. He recollected that Henry Stafford was the only good flute-player in the neighborhood, and concluded at once that Stafford was the gentleman who sat in the skiff and produced the sweet melody. "Who is the lady?" That was the question now asked, and earnestly considered, by the youth who stood on the bank. The lady was too far away to be recognized; but Branley had a suspicion — one that was painful, indeed almost agonizing — that the lady was Flora Calvert. This girl was very dear to him now. He had begun, during the summer, to

regard her as his own, and how could he surrender her to another?

The sun was setting; shadows spread over the water; even twilight began to obscure the face of the world. Branley stood and watched the skiff. Sometimes, apparently, it advanced, then retreated, moving on a line parallel with the shore. Sometimes the player touched his instrument; and, in the calm evening, his notes floated sweetly over the water, and could be distinctly heard by people in the town. At length, Branley looked around. Several persons were standing near, apparently listening to the music. He saluted them, but asked no questions respecting the lady about whom he felt so much concern. Presently, Charles Calvert came up, and took a position among the group of listeners. Branley recognized his friend, took his hand, but did not inquire for Flora—in fact, scarcely spoke at all. Perhaps by this time articulation had become a difficult matter.

At last, the skiff turned and moved in the direction of the landing. Charles and the other persons engaged in conversation. Branley still watched the skiff. It was now approaching the shore—slowly, indeed; still it was certainly approaching. The agitated youth began to inquire, mentally, “Shall I stay? or shall I fly?” While he was thinking and hesitating, the skiff struck the shore. A gentleman and lady stepped out on the beach and walked up the hill. Branley looked, and saw Henry Stafford and Flora Calvert! His philosophy fled. His resolution—the resolution never to allow himself to feel disappointment and distress whatever should happen—failed utterly in this emergency. Indeed, he felt, at the moment, something like a sharp, excruciating pang of jealousy. Or, if not jealousy, it was, at any rate, a great, intolerable anguish. He felt at the moment—and surely that was misery enough—that he had lost the

hope and joy of his life. But what had happened? How did he know that anything had been lost? Why should he have been crushed to the earth? Flora recognized him instantly, offered her hand, spoke kindly and sweetly, and, no doubt, smiled, though he was not able, in the growing darkness, to discern clearly the expression of her face. Henry and Flora immediately separated; Flora joined Charley, and the brother and sister, bidding good evening to the persons around, started for their home. But Flora, turning, said to Mr. Branley, as Charles had said previously, "We'll expect to see you at our house before you leave the neighborhood."

Mr. Branley lodged in town with a friend. He had not a comfortable sleep. He had no pleasant dreams. He lay awake for hours, and indulged in painful reflections. "How different is this visit from the other!" he thought. "During that visit a great joy filled my heart; hope brightened the universe. Now, my heart is torn with anguish, and life and nature are shrouded in darkness." One thing kept him from utter despair and misery. It was this: "We'll expect to see you at our house before you leave." If Mr. Branley had not heard these words, it is probable that he would never have seen Flora Calvert again, and would not have taught a second term at Konneautt Lake. A man's destiny is determined sometimes by a word — sometimes by a look.

Next day, possessed with doubts, fears, and perplexities, but remembering Flora's kind intimation that a visit would be expected, the young man called at Mrs. Calvert's. He saw no change in the girl. He received the usual hearty welcome; he heard the same sweet, bird-like tones of voice; and he saw — he felt sure this time — the beautiful smile that had so often filled his heart with rapture and inspired it with hope. The delighted youth indulged in a soliloquy somewhat like this: "I have been

playing the fool. I had no cause for jealousy. Why could not Henry and Flora take a little sail without distressing me or any one? Then I have resolved not to rest my life and happiness on any woman. I have resolved not to interfere with the happiness of others. I have resolved to be a man, — nay, to be a Christian, to do right, to accept, with cheerfulness, whatever is allotted me, in the present life, by a wise and kind Providence. I must be myself again.” But here was a psychological phenomenon which may deserve attention. The young man’s peace and happiness restored his philosophy; his philosophy did not restore his peace and happiness. Flora’s hearty welcome and beautiful smile accomplished the whole blessed result, first restoring the lost peace and happiness, and then restoring the lost philosophy. It may be inferred that it is easy for us to be philosophers and professed Christians when life is prosperous. It may be inferred that adversity will try the strength and worth of our philosophy and our religion.

The winter school was formally tendered to Mr. Branley, and was formally accepted by him. While returning home, though he did not feel the gladness and buoyancy which he experienced in June, he tried to persuade himself that the object of his visit was fully gained.

CHAPTER XVI.

A COMEDY.

JOHN BRANLEY began his second term. The skies were bright now. He had the promise of good wages. He boarded at one place, and had very pleasant accommodations. No one proposed rules for the government

of the school. The scholars had a fresh supply of books, and apparently entered upon their studies with proper spirit and resolution. The teacher was happy. Flora Calvert, it is true, was not a scholar, her school-days being over; but he could see her at church, or at a party, or at a singing-school; and when opportunities were wanting or too far apart, a short and pleasant walk enabled him to see her at home. As the teacher often needed exercise, and as a walk in the open air was the best he could secure, a walk to Mrs. Calvert's occurred almost every Saturday afternoon, and not unfrequently at other times. He usually found the girl whom he wished to see. Sometimes he found her sewing. Sometimes he found her at the "big wheel," spinning wool, flying back and forward, and making a hum, as if, indeed, she had been a humming-bird. Once or twice he had a glimpse of her at the wash-tub, her sleeves rolled up and her white, round arms exposed. However employed, Flora was always beautiful and interesting, and always filled his heart with the most pleasurable emotions. In his interviews with this young lady, Mr. Branley was always respectful, polite, and decorous.

It happened that singing-schools were scarce this winter. Perhaps teachers did not offer their services. Perhaps money was not abundant and teachers could not be readily paid. Perhaps the young people had become tired of singing, and were disposed to find some other source of amusement. Several young men, Mr. Branley being one of them, proposed the formation of a literary society. There had been, almost every winter, a debating society at Evansburgh. The town and neighborhood contained some famous debaters. Mr. Flint, the blacksmith, was one. Mr. Dunbar, a carpenter, and a preacher of some kind, was another. Among a younger class of men, Mr. Stafford and Mr. Bowditch were con-

spicuous as ready talkers. The old debaters favored the new movement; and a meeting was appointed with a view to the adoption of a constitution and by-laws. The meeting was held, and complete success crowned its deliberations. Near the close of the meeting, Mr. Branley offered a resolution which excited some interest. The resolution invited the ladies to attend the meetings of the society. Mr. Branley said that he wished to provide, for the people of Evansburgh and vicinity, a source of innocent amusement, and also an additional means of acquiring useful knowledge. The young men, not doubting their ability to amuse and instruct the ladies and all others, supported the resolution enthusiastically; the elderly men offered no objections; and the resolution was adopted with entire unanimity.

It must be admitted that Mr. Branley, in offering and advocating his resolution, did not mention the special object which he had in view. He wished to see Flora Calvert on Tuesday evening as well as on Saturday afternoon. At the same time, he proposed to make a strong effort to win her admiration or most favorable opinion. He believed that Flora had a keen intellect and an aspiring nature, and could not possibly be pleased with a man who was not bright, intelligent, and ambitious. He believed that he could show himself to advantage in an intellectual encounter, or prove to Flora that he had talents, that he had oratorical gifts, that he could be a statesman, that he could be anything or do anything. He knew that he already had her respect, and he felt pretty sure that, if he could win her admiration, he would ultimately win her heart. Such were some of Mr. Branley's secret thoughts and purposes. But if these had been known, would he not have received the congratulations of the wise and good? Happy is the youth who earnestly desires the esteem and affection of an intelligent

and virtuous woman. Prosperous and noble will probably be the career of the man, who, meeting such a woman, makes a strong and persistent effort to merit, to win, to retain, her admiration and love.

No ladies were present at the first meeting. Perhaps the question chosen for discussion did not suit them. The question was this: "Can spirit exist independently of matter?" It is a fact that questions which are now frequently brought forward by sceptics, and which are discussed by scientists, metaphysicians, and theologians, were discussed, many years ago, in a small country village. And it is a fact that some of the debaters were able, even in the treatment of the most abstruse questions, to speak with great fluency, if not with great logical power. Mr. Flint, the famous orator, confessed that he could not get a satisfactory hold of the difficult subject; but Mr. Dunbar seemed to grasp it with ease, and to overwhelm the materialists with an avalanche of solid arguments.

Mr. Branley was satisfied with his share of the discussion, but he was not satisfied with the audience. He had played the orator for nothing; and then, while his argument was good, he knew that it might have been very much better. He felt sure that the presence of the ladies would have operated as a mighty stimulus, insuring, on his part, the grandest display of both logic and oratory. Determined to bring out the ladies next time, he proposed the following question: "Is beauty a greater power than wit?" The question was adopted, and speakers were selected and arranged. During the following two or three days the young men were distinguished for enterprise and industry. Their efforts, however, were not, in all cases, in the field of investigation and study. The majority simply went around from house to house, announcing the interesting question, and soliciting the

presence of the ladies at the next meeting of the society.

Branley was one of the few who endeavored to master the question and accumulate arguments. He employed his spare hours in reading and thinking. And not unfrequently, during school hours, he forgot his duties and began to think about the comparative influence of beauty and wit. He looked around for information. He explored the village library; he found Cook's Voyage Around the World, the Bride of Lammermuir, and a few other histories and romances; but he did not find one scientific work, or a volume that could supply any special aid. However, Dr. Marsden's library supplied a few scientific facts. In making his preparations for the intellectual battle, Mr. Branley was compelled to rely, in a great measure, on his former reading, and on his fancy and power of invention.

When the important hour had arrived the house was full of people. A large number of young ladies were present. Mr. Branley glanced along a row of fair damsels and saw Flora Calvert. He was inspired. He felt equal to the great occasion. He longed for the moment when he could display himself, intellectually, before his lady-love. In the age of chivalry, a knight was wonderfully stimulated by the presence of a fine lady, and made prodigious efforts to win her favor. More recent times have exhibited conduct which, to say the least, is equally worthy of notice and approval. Mr. Branley, one evening, engaged in an intellectual tournament; before him sat a country girl, simple in her attire, but with a bright face and keen discernment, and with a heart more to be prized than a crown and a kingdom; and the young man made prodigious efforts to win her admiration.

It happened that several of the old debaters were absent. The discussion rested chiefly on Mr. Branley,

who supported the affirmative, or the side of beauty, and on Mr. Bowditch, who maintained the negative, or the side of wit. Mr. Bowditch was five or six years older than his opponent. He had read books, and he had seen a small part of the world. He was troubled with personal vanity ; but he had, no doubt, some general knowledge and some talent as a debater. While never confessing his ignorance in regard to anything, he evidently prided himself on his acquaintance with some branches of natural philosophy. There were three or four speakers on each side, and most of them spoke twice. Mr. Branley opened and closed the discussion. Speeches delivered, more than half a century ago, by young men who had some education and talents, and unbounded ambition, might, if reproduced, truly deserve a place among the "curiosities of literature." Two speeches, viz., the closing speech of Mr. Bowditch and the closing speech of Mr. Branley, with their mistakes, exaggerations and *non sequiturs*, as well as their sense and logic, will be given, in a condensed form, as far as may be possible.

Mr. Bowditch's argument was this : "The effect of beauty is a bodily sensation. The effect of wit is a lasting impression on the mind. Men may walk among beautiful objects — for instance, beautiful women — see a thousand charms, and yet be indifferent, or act as if they saw nothing. Let me explain. An external object produces an image on the retina of the eye, but may make no impression on the brain, and, consequently, produce no effect in the mind. Beauty is addressed to the eye ; it will, perhaps, produce an image on the retina ; but the image may be carried no farther, or it may be speedily effaced : in consequence, the effect on the brain, mind and affections, may be nothing at all. But wit makes a deep and lasting impression. It is addressed to the understanding. Wit does not stop in the ear as beauty stops in the eye. It

passes directly through the ear and reaches the brain, producing great mental results. Wit is real, solid sense, made keen, sharp, penetrating, and, therefore, fitted to reach the brain and the mind. Beauty is dumb, but wit speaks ; wit is sparkling sense ; wit is a stream of intelligence ; it necessarily reaches the mind of the listener and influences the feelings. An image of beauty fades away from the retina : usually, when the external object is withdrawn, the image vanishes, and there is no further effect. But wit impresses the substance of the brain, and, therefore, causes results of a most durable nature. Beauty, long seen, becomes uninteresting, is not beauty, is nothing, effects nothing. Wit never ceases to sparkle, never ceases to give delight, never ceases to attract and influence mankind, never ceases to be a great power in society. The wits of the world are the rulers of the world. My conclusion is, that the effect of beauty is superficial and transient, and that the effect of wit is deep and permanent. As thought is a greater power than a bodily sensation, so wit is a greater power than beauty."

Such was Mr. Bowditch's argument. It was delivered in a calm and serious manner ; it was not copiously illustrated by references to history, but it seemed to be based on scientific principles ; and it probably made some impression on the audience. Perhaps some persons regarded the argument as conclusive.

Mr. Branley rose and spoke as follows : "I must first notice my opponent's argument and correct some of his mistakes. The effect of beauty is more than a bodily sensation. It belongs to the mind. It is perception ; it is appreciation ; it is enjoyment, — all being mental processes or states. God creates beauty, and prepares the mind to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy it. An image of beauty does not lodge in the eye, making no further ad-

vance. All the organs of sensation are connected with the brain. The eye is as near the brain as the ear. To say the least, an image of beauty can reach the mind as readily as the most sparkling witticism. Nor is the image of beauty easily effaced from the mind. Physiologists tell us that external objects produce corresponding images on the retina of the eye; that the images may remain, at least for a time; that the images on the retina make corresponding impressions on the brain; that the impressions may remain, at least for a time, even when the external objects are withdrawn from the eye and the images are withdrawn from the retina. Of course, when there are impressions on the brain, there will be impressions on the mind. But the mental impressions will outlast the cerebral. The mental will be immortal, like the mind itself, and will be a power forever. Memories, especially of beautiful things, never fade, never perish. And the mind, remembering an external object, especially a beautiful object — for instance, a beautiful woman — can impress the image of that object on the brain and the retina, and give it the appearance and power of an external reality. Thus a beautiful woman, whether present or absent, may be always seen and admired, and may reign in the heart.

"The eye," said Mr. Branley, who had studied logic slightly and knew some of its terms, "may supply an *a priori* argument. The eye gives us a view or knowledge of the material universe. The eye discovers all beauties, — the beauty of earth and sky, — the beauty of land and sea, mountain, river, forest and cultivated plain, — the beauty of form and color, of proportion and symmetry, of designs and adaptations. The eye gives to man the conception or idea of external beauty, and makes that idea a 'joy forever.' The eye is confessedly more important than the ear. Are not the achievements of this organ greater

than the achievements of the other? Or, which is virtually the same question, Is not beauty a greater power than wit?

"But a sense of the beautiful actually moves the world. It causes men and women to traverse the earth and gaze at natural objects. It settles the architecture of temples, palaces, and millions of human dwellings. It superintends the garden, the field, the landscape, in all civilized countries. It inspires and moves the painter, the poet, —in fact, the artist of every kind. The world is full of pictures, descriptive poems, and other beautiful things, wrought by the hand or mind, but resulting from a sense of the beautiful. Even the machinist is controlled by this sense. Works of utility have the most elegant forms and the most complete finish. And who can measure the pleasure afforded by the beauties of Nature and the beauties of art? The power of beauty in producing beautiful things, and in giving pleasure to mankind, is beyond conception.

"The beauty of man has ever been recognized as a power. His erect form, his stately step, his majestic countenance, are confessedly the beauty and glory of the material creation. Man himself has a regard for the form and beauty of man. The beasts that roam the forests and the deserts, quail before the majesty of his person and the brilliancy of his eye. Woman, especially, as we all know and admit, is beautiful. Her beauty is the object of countless panegyrics. It is the inspiration of genius. It is the theme of poetry. It is the attraction, the light, the life, of romances. It is a great topic in all history. It has been described, if not extolled, by prophets and apostles. It has been named thousands of times when wit was not mentioned once. It has been worshiped by millions when wit was worshiped by none. It has given inspiration, purpose, impulse, energy, to men

without number, — to men of the greatest abilities, and men of the highest positions. It has produced contention, revolution, war, bloodshed, among the potentates and nations of the earth. At the same time, it has ruled among the masses, elevating and ennobling thousands, or producing the highest state of culture and refinement in society, as well as sometimes leading to jealousy, contention, and misery. The beauty of woman is the supreme power of the world.

“The physical weakness of woman may supply an *a priori* argument. Woman is — must be — the equal of man. But how? She is inferior to man in stature and in strength. And while I cheerfully grant that woman is usually endowed with good sense, I do not concede that, in wit or brightness and power of mind, she has an indisputable claim to superiority. Then the wit of woman is apt to neutralize itself. If it is sharp, it wounds and hurts; if it attracts, it also repels. If it wins, it often loses. Wit, then, is not the great quality which compensates woman for her physical weakness. Beauty is, must be, the compensation. Woman has much beauty; man has comparatively little. Beauty makes her his equal; in fact, makes her more, — makes woman a sovereign and man her obedient servant, if not her slave.

“Let us make an appeal to history. Beautiful women have always ruled the world. The Bible often speaks of beautiful women and their great influence. The beauty of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, was a cause of great anxiety to the patriarch. When Jacob visited his cousins he was fascinated, not by the wit of Leah, but by the beauty of Rachel. Such was the power of Rachel’s charms, that seven years of waiting seemed to be only a few days. What subdued and controlled Ahasuerus, the mighty king of Persia? Not the wit and cunning of

Haman, not the wit, good sense, and modesty of Vashti, but the beauty of Esther. What charmed, ensnared, and ruined, the wisest man and the greatest monarch whom the world ever saw? Beautiful, bad women.

"But what is taught by profane history? Over all the world, beautiful women have been the divinities worshiped by men. Witty women have not been worshiped: they have been rather feared and shunned. Seldom, or never, have men fallen down and worshiped wit; but men without number — kings, conquerors, orators, philosophers, as well as common men — have fallen down and worshiped beauty. May I name Cleopatra? She did not possess extraordinary wit, yet she enslaved Mark Antony, the great Roman, and many others. Beauty gave to this bad woman her dominion over the thoughts and hearts of men. What ruled France and its kings through so many centuries? Not wit, not sense, not virtue, not the Divine Law, nor human law. What then? The beauty of women. What caused the whole world to mourn over the fate of Mary, queen of Scots? Was it the suffering of an innocent woman? Was it the untimely extinction of a bright intelligence? Was it the loss of a brilliant wit? No. It was the sudden, final disappearance of transcendent beauty.

"Let us appeal to experience. The fact is, we are all attracted and governed by beauty, or by what is beauty to us. A mother's face is beautiful. To each of us it is the face of an angel. Calmly and lovingly it looks upon us, fills our hearts with tender emotions, and incites us to a life of virtue and honorable effort. Who forgets a mother's face? Who ceases to be influenced by its loving gaze? A sister's face — that thoughtful, gentle face, showing so much affection for us, showing so much interest in our welfare, expressing so much delight when we are happy, and so much sympathy when we are in trouble

— is very, very beautiful. And has it not power? Base and insensible must be the man who is not touched and moved by the face of a sister. And then, the face of a sweetheart! a face with its dimples, and roses, and beaming eyes, and smile divine! a face expressive of innocence, purity, intelligence and love! That face speaks and tells everything. That face satisfies the eye and the heart. And is that face forgotten? Never. Does it cease to have power? No. That face, present literally, or with its image in the mind, will never cease to give pleasure, encouragement, and strength. Such, gentlemen, is our experience. And the experience of all who are not sunk below the level of humanity is the same. Womanhood, comprising, more or less, the beauty of form and face, and associated with virtue, modesty and kindness, imparts to men their highest pleasure, and tends greatly to purify and ennoble their lives. Indeed, the moral beauty of fair, intelligent, virtuous women, as all admit, is the saving influence in society.”

Thus far, Mr. Branley exercised complete self-control, and spoke calmly and prudently. In fact, he was just rehearsing parts of a speech which had been carefully written and committed to memory. If he had now closed his remarks and sat down, no comedy, or tragedy, or whatever name it may bear, would have followed. But, at last, having appealed to the gentlemen, he turned and appealed to the ladies. From that moment, as people said afterwards, he lost his equilibrium. He was seized by an uncontrollable excitement or enthusiasm. And he felt irresistibly disposed to give expression to fancies that were utterly grotesque and ridiculous. Commonly, this young man was very sedate and quiet, and very guarded in the use of words. But he had a susceptible nature, and sometimes, as happened during the excursion on the lake, excitement obtained the mastery and produced some

extravagance both in words and actions. On this occasion the circumstances were truly exciting. The question itself awakened attention and interest. Then, Mr. Branley felt that he had an able opponent and that he must, like lawyers and politicians, employ every sort of means in order to win a victory. Then, quite near, sat a long row of beauties, listening eagerly to the praises of beauty; and then, in the midst of those pretty and eager listeners, sat Flora Calvert, the prettiest and most eager of all. Perhaps there was some excuse for the young man's hyperboles.

"Ladies," exclaimed the orator, "I appeal to you. We, young men, have candidly confessed that beauty captures our hearts and rules our lives. Is not your experience slightly similar to ours? Men have, or may have, beauty — a beauty which belongs to their sex. What attracts the notice and excites the admiration of women? Manly beauty. And now, ladies, permit me to mention two facts which you can easily verify, and which will decide the question before us. One fact is this: I have wit, and my friend here, Mr. Bowditch, has beauty; or, to state the fact in another form, I have no beauty, and my friend has no wit. Mr. Bowditch virtually admits that he has no understanding. How often did you hear him say, 'I don't understand Mr. Branley!' Now, as the judges, and all others who have common sense, understand me perfectly, it follows that an understanding cannot be one of his endowments. It is true that, at the beginning of the discussion, Mr. Bowditch claimed that he had some ideas. Have any appeared? No. As he presented no ideas, when ideas were so much needed, it may be presumed that he had none. But my friend, as I have said, has beauty. No one doubts this; no one denies it. I proceed to mention the second fact. It is this: With my best efforts, solid argument, splendid

metaphors, and flashing witticisms, I have scarcely secured your attention, and have made little or no impression on your minds; but Mr. Bowditch stood before you as an Apollo or Adonis, and his beauty — his beauty alone — fixed your attention and secured your favor; and, ladies, at this moment, as I observe, you are gazing at Mr. Bowditch, while his beauty is exciting in your minds both admiration and rapture. Mr. Bowditch's beauty, thus vanquishing my wit, practically decides the question, and gives me a victory. But, alas! what signifies my gain if, while I gain a decision from the judges, I lose the admiration and favor of the ladies! And what signifies my friend's loss, if, while he loses the decision, he gains the admiration and favor of lovely woman!"

Mr. Branley closed the argument. The speech was followed by general silence. If demonstrations of approval had been common in those days, the young men might have cheered and the young women might have waved their handkerchiefs. The judges, three in number, consulted together a minute or two, and unanimously agreed that, in view of the arguments, the question should be decided in favor of beauty.

The society adjourned, and the ladies retired. Mr. Branley remained in the house to transact some business pertaining to the school. He felt pretty comfortable; although he was not sure that his performance had made a good impression on Flora's mind, or on the mind of any other girl. He had won the favorable decision of the judges, and that was something — enough, in fact, to give him much real pleasure. But, oh! how uncertain are human affairs! How fleeting, sometimes, are self-gratulations! The comedy was past, and now came a small tragedy; or was it the comedy continued with some variation — the comedy in a new act? Mr. Bowditch was deeply offended. He was perfectly furious. Trem-

bling with rage, and displaying a pair of fists, he approached the offender, and wanted to demonstrate, not the superiority of his wit or his beauty, but the superiority of his muscles. Mr. Branley explained, apologized, declared that he was only jesting, — affirmed that the debate had been getting a little dull, — that some of the girls began to look drowsy, — that he wished to waken them up; and he begged Mr. Bowditch to wait till the next Tuesday evening, and then repay, with double interest, the seeming ridicule and sarcasm.

While thus talking and pleading, Branley reached the door, and escaped for the moment. As he entered the main street, he was overtaken by the raging, unappeasable man. He then sought protection in a tailor's shop, and Bowditch walked back and forward on the outside, raging, shouting, stamping, and bantering. At last, having relieved himself by this burst of passion, or having grown uncomfortably cool in the frosty air, he retired, giving Branley an opportunity to proceed to his boarding-house.

Mr. Branley felt deeply mortified; he suspected that he had been imprudent, if, indeed, he had not made himself ridiculous; and he had some fear of public and general disapprobation. However, the people, learning the facts, were simply amused; they regarded the debate, especially the closing part, as a nice little comedy; and many laughed heartily at the *denouement*. Contrary to Branley's expectation, no one sympathized with Bowditch. "If he had not been so conceited, he would have taken no offense," said one man. "The balloon has collapsed," said another. "Shorn of his vanity, he will be improved," said a third. Squire Bluffton, meeting Mr. Branley, remarked, "A debate is a debate, and must be accompanied by pleasantries, witticisms, and sharp repartees. If a debate has not these accompaniments, it will

probably be very dull and uninteresting. Then every man has a tongue, and it may be used for both offensive and defensive purposes. If a man cannot defend himself with his tongue, without having recourse to bodily violence, he should never engage in an argument." While a few persons may have reproached Mr. Branley for not fighting the madman, the great majority of the people, overlooking his imprudence, if they saw any, praised him for his self-control, forbearance and honorable conduct.

The young man, who was at once an orator and a lover, could not see that his eloquence, or his continued and marked attentions, had won any special regard from Flora Calvert. Yet he thought the "situation" favorable. Flora was never distant and cold in her manners. Besides, there seemed to be an open field for effort. Tom McConnell had disappeared, — that is, was no longer seen among her admirers and suitors. Henry Stafford, having established business at another place, was often absent from Evansburgh; and there was no apparent intimacy or regard subsisting between him and Miss Flora. Mr. Branley was hopeful and happy. He did not now formally and urgently press his suit; but he never forgot or neglected a chance of seeing Flora, and showing the interest which he felt in her life and welfare.

But if the young man had fully known and believed certain reports, he would not have been so comfortable. These reports related to George Lambrun and Flora Calvert. In the beginning of this winter Lambrun made a renewed, strenuous, persistent effort to win Miss Flora; and some people began to think that he was making successful advances.

Flora's considerate friends became alarmed. Her mother felt very uneasy. The dashing suitor was a stranger. He was handsome. He was plausible and insinuating in his manners. And, at the same time, there

was no limit to his boldness and assurance. Flora's friends, therefore, regarded him as a dangerous man, and had serious apprehensions in respect to her future happiness.

Mrs. Patton made a visit to Mrs. Hall one day. These women were neighbors and friends of the Calvert family, and felt a great interest in Flora's welfare. Their conversation was chiefly about Flora and her new suitor.

"If Flora shows him favor," Mrs. Patton remarked, using her Irish dialect, "it will be just what has happened a thousand times. Girls are very apt to be caught by strangers. They may care nothing for old acquaintances; but if a handsome stranger comes around, he is sure to catch their eyes; and if he tries and is cunning, he is sure to inveigle some poor girl into marriage; and misery is her portion. Who can forget Betsy Graham? Sam Purdy came to see his friends. He was tall and handsome. He saw Betsy, courted and married her. He is an idle, drunken, worthless fellow; and poor Betsy, as you and I know well, spends her life in poverty and wretchedness. Oh, why do not girls think!"

"Do you know," inquired Mrs. Hall, "that I spoke to Flora about this new beau, and expressed my opinions freely?"

"No; what did she say?"

"She said, laughing, 'Don't give yourself any trouble.'"

"Ah, that is the way!" exclaimed Mrs. Patton. "The girls think they know everything; they think all is right; they think the stranger is just what he pretends to be, and they throw themselves away — poor creatures! Why don't girls take advice? Flora is sensible and prudent; but I am afraid. Lambrun is just the man to deceive a girl, and cheat her out of her happiness and her life."

However, Flora Calvert did not marry the stranger. And, happily, Mr. Branley did not learn much about the fears and anxieties which prevailed among her friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRAGEDY.

NEW YEAR'S DAY came with the promise of a great variety of amusements. Among them it was expected that sleighing, ball-playing, and skating, would be prominent. The day proved to be very favorable; the weather was calm and delightful; the roads were in fine order; and the lake was covered with a sheet of freshly-formed, smooth, beautiful ice. What more was needed to make the day a perfectly happy one?

Well, some things were wanting. Many girls wanted nice winter hats or suitable dresses, and many boys and young men wanted good winter clothing. Nor was that all. Many people had no horses and no sleighs. Many boys and young men had no skates, and could not purchase any, none being for sale. However, inventive genius and manufacturing skill were employed to supply the means of enjoyment. The large boys, resolving to make some use of the beautiful ice, planned what they called a flying-machine, and went to work, enthusiastically, to construct one in accordance with their intellectual model. They provided a round post or shaft, six or eight inches in diameter and ten or twelve feet in length. They made a round, smooth hole in the ice, the size corresponding with the size of the shaft. They inserted the shaft, placing it upright, the lower end resting on the bottom of the lake, the upper end rising above the ice seven or eight feet.

They inserted in the shaft three or four slender arms. The uppermost arm was about twenty feet long, the outer end drooping. The other arms were much shorter. They attached a slender and very light sled to the extreme outer point of the long arm. And then the machine was ready for business.

At ten o'clock the lake, especially in the vicinity of Evansburgh, presented a most lively scene. A large number of people had gathered from the village and the country. While many stood on the bank as spectators, a much larger number were on the ice, engaged in their various amusements. In one quarter men were testing the speed of their horses; though there was no betting, and, strictly speaking, no racing. As the ice was of uncertain thickness, they did not venture far from the shore. The men and boys who were provided with skates flew hither and thither, making their zigzags and graceful curves, sometimes dashing among the standing groups, carrying away hats and bonnets, and greatly amusing the spectators. But the flying-machine was the great object of attraction. It gathered a large company of young men and maidens, boys and little girls. Two grown persons or four children were usually placed on the sled, three or four stout boys, seizing the short arms, turned the shaft, and the sled, with its rosy-cheeked and laughing passengers, swept around in a circle. It required a little effort to start the machine; but, when fairly in motion, it could be operated with great ease. At any rate, the boys who turned the machine seemed to have as much pleasure as the folks who rode on the sled. Sometimes, when five or six boys grasped the short arms and worked energetically, the sled flew around at what the children called "lightning speed"; and sometimes, when the sled was flying at the highest rate, it suddenly became detached and flew off on a tangent, the event causing a general

shout and a vast amount of merriment. Among the children there was a constant clamor or struggle for a turn on the sled; and the young men and women, for an hour or two, stood as spectators, generously allowing the little folks to monopolize the rides.

Old Susy Mosman, who lived near the lake, came out to look at the people engaged in their diversions. She found Mrs. Hall, and the two women stood together, looking and talking.

"This is great sport," said Mrs. Hall. "You and I have had our time; but I take a great deal of pleasure now looking at the frolic of these happy young creatures."

"There is more than a frolic going on here," said Mrs. Mosman.

"What do you mean?" the other inquired.

"See!" replied Mrs. Mosman. "There stands Mr. Branley and there stands Flora Calvert. Don't they look alike — just like a brother and sister? — both tall, straight, neat, with good features, bright eyes, and pleasant countenances. Why, they talk alike and act alike."

"Well, do you mean to say they are courting?"

"Yes, that is what I mean to say. See! They are standing together. He is looking at her, and she is looking at him. He smiles and she smiles. They are talking. I wish I could hear what they are saying. But I can guess; it is something pretty and sweet. I do hope they will make a match. I am sure they ought to marry; they were made for each other."

"You are right, Mrs. Mosman. But I am afraid. George Lambrun is about. He is paying great attention to Flora; and some people think she likes him. See, Lambrun is one of the skaters, and I half suspect that Flora is watching him, her eyes glancing past Mr. Branley."

"Oh, I would like to run over to Flora and tell her to have nothing to do with George Lambrun. He is a scamp, I'll warrant. Branley is worth more than a thousand Lambruns."

The skating, sledding, shouting and laughing, went on, without abatement, for several hours. The flying-machine proved to be what would now be called a "grand success." It afforded what some children would now call "royal sport." Every child had three or four turns on the sled, and made, each time, at least a dozen revolutions. Then, as an opportunity presented itself, a young man and his sweetheart occupied the sled and enjoyed an excursion, while many congratulated them on their smooth and pleasant journey through life. A very happy company surrounded the flying-machine. Why is it that a machine, affording, as it may, so much healthful exercise, and so much innocent pleasure, is no longer seen on our lakes and rivers?

It was observed, at about one o'clock, that three of the skaters, moving abreast, started in the direction of Long Point. They were steadily watched by many persons who stood on the shore. "They are racing," one man remarked. "They are passing over the deepest water in the lake," another said; "and the ice is thin there. I believe they are now very near the place where the teacher broke through last winter." The skaters reached Long Point, and, without stopping, wheeled around, and apparently directed their course towards a point on the shore where there was a large group of people. The interest in the race, or whatever it was, had now become general and pretty strong. Even the crowd encircling the machine became interested, ceased operating, and watched the skaters, who were coming with the speed of the wind, or, at any rate, with the speed of a race-horse.

The skaters reached the deep water. Apparently, they

were moving abreast and closely together. Every person was looking. Suddenly, the skaters disappeared from view. A great shriek rose from the spectators. And a second or two afterwards a cry came over the ice.

"They have fallen in!" shouted many voices.

"Help! help!" was the meaning of the cry, if not the cry itself, that came over the lake.

"Run, men and boys," cried Susy Mosman. "They'll drown! they'll drown!"

"Carry something in your hands," shouted Dr. Marsden.

More of the fearful cries came from the water. Every man, and almost every boy, looked hurriedly around for something that would aid in the terrible emergency. One man seized a hayfork. Another man seized a spear-handle. Several men and boys picked up each a short board. Mr. Branley sprang into a carpenter's shop, and found a long, narrow, light board—the very thing he wanted—seized it, and rushed for the lake. At the same moment a great crowd ran down the bank, and joined the crowd on the ice. All the young men, some elderly men, and many boys, ran, at their highest speed, towards the men struggling in the water. Branley was seen to be foremost, carrying his board, and many blessed him in their hearts.

Another mournful cry came from the struggling men. All knew what it meant. At this time, the distress on the shore was a great throbbing agony. Old men looked and shuddered. Elderly women closed their eyes and wrung their hands. Young women stood with blanched cheeks and trembling forms. Little children, with pale faces, tearful eyes, and piteous moaning, clung to their mothers and older sisters.

"See Branley!" cried Susy Mosman. "He is almost there—maybe he will save them yet."

"O! I wish they would all come back," cried Mrs. Patton. "They cannot save the drowning men, and they will be drowned themselves."

Meanwhile one of the struggling men succeeded in placing himself on ice that bore his weight. Lying flat, he drew himself forward, and soon felt that he was saved. Presently, another man had the same good fortune. One was still in the water. As the men and boys advanced, they grew alarmed on their own account. They began to fear that the ice might break, and that all might go down and perish together. All stopped except Branley. Then a few, seeing him pass on safely, made a further advance, walking apart and very slowly. When these approached within fifty or sixty yards of the broken ice, they were thoroughly dismayed. A great field of broken ice was before them, and the ice beneath their feet seemed scarcely strong enough to bear their weight. And they saw poor Lambrun in the water, making desperate efforts to save himself. "What can we do?" asked one of the trembling men. "Nothing," responded another; "we ourselves are in great danger." They made a final stop.

But John Branley still advanced. He had seen the second man creep on the ice and escape, and he now watched the third man struggling among the fragments. Again and again, Lambrun endeavored to raise himself on the sound ice; again and again, the ice broke, and he fell back into the freezing water. Branley felt utterly fearless, trusting in his board and in Providence, at the same time using every precaution. Approaching within thirty or forty feet of the open water, he lay down flat on the ice, moved the board before him, and watched the struggling man. He projected the board beyond the edge of the unbroken ice, putting an end within Lambrun's reach. The poor man grasped the board, but was not able to raise himself, — indeed, seemed scarcely able

to maintain his hold. Branley saw that the man was benumbed or exhausted; he crept upon the board, drew himself forward, and endeavored to give further aid. He reached out beyond the edge of the ice, and his hand had almost touched Lambrun's hand, when the chilled and exhausted man suddenly relaxed his hold, sunk and disappeared. Branley now began to think about himself, — saw that he was resting on ice only an inch or two thick, and endeavored, by slipping back on the board, to escape from his perilous situation.

Boys began to run back to the shore, and one, almost breathless, cried out,

"Somebody is drowned!"

"Oh! who?" gasped one here and there among the crowd.

"Don't know. May be Lambrun, may be our teacher, may be both."

"The Lord help us!" exclaimed Susy Mosman. Others had thoughts and emotions which could not be expressed in words.

Boys continued to arrive, making a similar report. The distress of the people was very great. A feeling of suspense became intolerable; and many women sunk down on the snow or ice. Sobs and moans were general. Many of the people were thinking about Branley. Some were thinking about Lambrun. Others were thinking, though not exclusively, about a sufferer who stood on the bank. Mrs. Mosman and Mrs. Hall met again, grasped each other's hands, and exclaimed in turn, "O poor Flora! She has lost one of her lovers, and may be both!" The two women looked around to see the girl for whom they felt so much pity. They saw her. She had not sunk down; she stood — stood alone, and gazed over the lake. The women, though expecting to see a maiden in distress, were startled. They thought that

death had never made a paler face than Flora's. They thought that death had never made a stiller form than the one before them. Pale and motionless, she stood and gazed at a crowd of young men and boys, now rapidly approaching the shore.

"Our teacher! our teacher! He is there!" cried a little girl, in glad tones.

"The master! the master! Mr. Branley is not drowned at all," shouted three or four boys, as they rushed up the bank.

The people recognized Mr. Branley and hailed him with delight. What Flora Calvert said or did, or what her face expressed, at the moment, no one observed and no one can tell.

Austin and Bardwell, two of the skaters, were brought to the shore, but Lambrun was left in the deep, cold water. It seemed almost unaccountable that, while two escaped, Lambrun, the most active of the three, was drowned. Possibly his very agility and violent efforts caused the continuous fracture of the ice, and brought on the fatal result.

Of course there was no more amusement on that New Year's Day. The afternoon was passed in sorrow. Lambrun had been regarded very much as a stranger, and perhaps had not been generally liked; but now, every person grieved; and every person spoke respectfully, even tenderly, of the man whose life had come to so sudden and tragic a close.

The body of the drowned man was recovered and decently buried. There was not much weeping at the funeral. But there was a general sadness in the community. Sensitive and thoughtful people reflected that, somewhere in the land, there were friends—perhaps a mother, perhaps a sister—who, hearing that George was drowned in Konneautt Lake, would shed many bitter tears.

Branley was now recognized as a hero. Everybody praised him. He had not saved Lambrun; but, as all declared, he had made a most perilous and fearful venture—he had made a most heroic effort, and, therefore, deserved the highest honor ever bestowed on men. Old Susy Mosman, in particular, lavished her praises on the heroic youth.

“What a noble young man!” she exclaimed, while talking to some of her neighbors. “Did he not fly with his board? Did he not leave all others behind? How he ventured to the very edge of the frail ice! How he risked his life!—risked it, too, for his rival—for the very man who wanted to take his sweetheart! O, what does Flora think now? She ought to be proud of her lover. She should most gladly give him her heart and her hand, and her fortune too, if she had a million dollars.”

Susy Mosman and others watched Flora closely. They saw that she grieved for Lambrun; but they could not see that her sorrow was different from the sorrow of other people. At the same time they failed to see that Flora manifested an increasing regard for Mr. Branley.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUCCESS.

NEAR the close of the school Mr. Branley was honored with a party. It was held at Squire Bluffton's. The company was large, comprising elderly people as well as young people. Not much was said about Branley's heroic venture on the ice; but the guests allowed themselves to

speaking freely in regard to his success as a teacher. Squire Bluffton indulged in a complimentary remark.

"When we build our college we shall ask Mr. Branley to be the President."

"Be careful," the teacher said, humorously. "I might fail as a President, disappoint you badly, and lose all my honor."

Mr. Flint, the blacksmith, proposing something more practical, observed,

"We should engage Mr. Branley for next summer."

"The school-house cannot hold me much longer," the teacher declared, speaking with marked emphasis. "When summer comes, I shall feel a strong inclination to be out in the open world, — in the green fields or green woods."

"Did you say, 'the *shady* woods'?" inquired Miss Jane Folsom. "Do you expect to lie in the shade next summer?"

"O no, Miss Jane," the teacher replied. "I expect to plow the fields, mow the meadows, and cut down the forests. If you should see me in the woods handling my bright axe, you would think the lightning was flashing among the trees."

"Well, I would like to see you, and the lightning too," the girl said, mischievously.

"Jane, would you not like to live in his cabin and cook his dinner?" inquired Miss Van Arsdale.

"Pshaw!" was all the answer which the young lady condescended to make.

"If I were Mr. Branley," the blacksmith observed, "I would go neither into the fields or the woods; I would go into a law-office and study law."

"Your great conceit and fondness for talking would lead that way," the Squire remarked, with a little pleasant sarcasm.

"You are more than half wrong," Mr. Flint responded. "I like to talk, as we all do; but I like to do some other things. For instance, I like to make money. Now, the lawyers are the men who get it. They give three words of advice, and charge more than a dollar a word. They take a big fee to manage a little case in court. They take a note for collection; the debtor comes and pays; and they pocket fifty or a hundred dollars for two minutes' work. Didn't you and I, the other day, see Dan Barker write something on a scrap of paper, and take two dollars for the little job? The lawyers have fine opportunities to speculate in stocks and lands. Don't they buy up all the unseated lands in our county? Then, Squire, I would like an office. It would be far easier, as well as more profitable, to sit in the Legislature or in Congress than to shoe horses and make plowshares. Now, the legal profession gives a man notoriety, fitness for office, and every advantage. Lawyers fill the Legislature and fill Congress. It usually takes a lawyer to be Governor, or President, or a Cabinet officer, or anything. There is Tom Murphy, with the brogue still on his tongue. Who would ever have thought of him as a candidate for Congress if he had not been a lawyer?"

Thus Mr. Flint maintained his reputation as a talker. If he had lived at a later time he would have seen the lawyers achieve much greater success in filling offices and amassing fortunes. In particular he would have noted how "statesmen," simply by selling their votes and influence, and by participating in various kinds of fraud, enrich themselves and rob the nation — sometimes, even after exposure, remaining in office, if not in honor. The Squire, having listened patiently to the blacksmith's oration, remarked, in a quiet way,

"Mr. Flint, if you were a lawyer, you would soon damage your character by sharp practice. Now, character is better than money."

"If a man has money he needs no character," the other replied, with an air of triumph. "If a man has money—that is, enough of it—all people will be obsequious; he can marry the woman he wants; and he can reach the highest offices and honors."

"What will it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" the Squire asked, using the words of Scripture.

"You don't mean to say that a lawyer or a rich man can't be saved—do you?"

"No, not just that. But the Good Book says, 'Woe unto you, lawyers!' And I believe that denunciation rests on many lawyers of the present day. And the Good Book says, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' Riches, obtained honestly, would be a source of danger to most men. Riches, obtained by dishonest means, are necessarily a curse."

"Squire, you are in the same category with the lawyers and the rich men. How have you obtained your money? If they are in danger, are you safe?"

"There is an immense difference between Justices of the Peace as a class and lawyers as a class. A Justice, initiating a suit, takes no side. He hears and weighs testimony; he carefully applies the law; he decides in accordance with his best judgment. For compensation he takes, when he can get it, just what the law allows. Have I enriched myself, Mr. Flint? Do you fancy that a house and lot in town and three small out-lots make me a rich man? Now, look at the lawyer. He takes the side of the man who first applies, or, as it may happen, the side of the man who offers the largest fee; half the time or more he has the wrong side; and, having that side, makes a great effort, employs all his skill or cunning to hide facts, pervert testimony, and defeat justice. Some lawyers like to have a bad case, as it gives them an

opportunity to display their sharpness, and gain credit with a certain class of people. There is a lawyer who has great popularity, and is deemed fit to be President, because he saved five murderers from the gallows."

"A lawyer is sworn to be true to his client."

"Yes, and so the lawyer, as the case may be, defends an extortioner or oppressor, saves a rogue from punishment, even helps a murderer to leave his cell and return to society."

"Squire, I am not concerned about the character of lawyers—I am thinking chiefly about their facilities for making money; but as you claim to be just to all men, you should remember that lawyers defend the weak, save the innocent from harm, keep the lights burning in the temple of justice, and are the great expounders of political science as well as of law."

"Well, I wish to give full credit to the lawyers for all the good they do, though it be done for money. Some lawyers are good men. Very many lawyers are not. In my judgment, the practice of law, considered as a whole, is demoralizing. It tends to promote cunning, craft, scheming,—properties which are shared with the lower animals. It tends to impair the sense of right and wrong and deaden the conscience. It develops a passion for money-making and a passion for office, and, at the same time, renders men unscrupulous in using means for the attainment of their desired objects. In my judgment, lawyers, as a class, are unsafe leaders in the State and in society, and do more harm than good. I hope, therefore, that Mr. Branley will not study law."

Some people may think that Squire Bluffton defamed the lawyers. Others may think that he simply stated the truth. People, in fact, are not exactly agreed in respect to the usefulness of the legal profession. Perhaps a majority believe that there must be such a profession, and that lawyers are one of the "necessary evils."

Meanwhile the young people, perhaps growing tired of the learned and sober discussion, passed quietly into another chamber, and had a conversation of their own. Various topics were discussed in a lively and satisfactory manner. At one time, when the talk slackened a little, the young gentlemen proposed the question, "What are the qualifications for married life?" and desiring, as they said, to enlighten the ladies, proceeded to answer it.

"Good sense is one," said George Howell.

"Good temper is another," said Charles Calvert.

"Industry is one," affirmed Jim McKay. Unfortunately, Jim added, "I want to marry a girl who can work."

The last remark gave Jane Folsom a chance which she could not afford to neglect.

"Yes, you want to lie in bed and take your ease, and let your wife keep you. Jim, you have ruined your prospect this night. You will look for a wife a long time before you get one. Gentlemen, don't expose yourselves any farther."

"Let us appeal to Flora," said Jim. "She has read many books, and I suppose has studied the question."

"The gentlemen have answered so far very well," Miss Calvert remarked. "My opinion is this: Piety (including, of course, good morals) and good sense, good temper or self-control, a kind, sympathizing nature, and habits of industry and economy, are the qualifications needed by candidates for matrimony." Flora's answer was just such a one as the young men expected; but she added something which they did not expect, and which prompted them to engage in the work of self-examination. "Gentlemen, if you have these qualifications, you are fit to marry; if you haven't them, you are not fit, and, of course, will not be able to marry sensible girls."

"Let us appeal to Mr. Branley," said George Howell.

"If Flora is our wisest girl, he is our wisest young man. He has already taught us many things; surely he can tell us what young folks need in order that they may enter safely into married life."

"Gentlemen," the teacher remarked, "Miss Flora has given a true and full answer. I cannot improve it, — cannot change a word, cannot add one."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Miss Jane, "you have shown your folly again by appealing to our teacher. You might have been sure that he would agree with Flora."

"Well," said Jim, in a tone slightly marked by seriousness, "it would be wise and safe for Mr. Branley and all of us to listen to Flora, and accept her opinions and advice."

"Let us all try to get the qualifications," Jane observed, with much apparent gravity.

Miss Van Arsdale introduced the subject which had been previously discussed by the elderly folks.

"Mr. Branley, the people are anxious to know what business or profession you have in view."

"The people, I am happy to see, take a great interest in my welfare," the teacher observed, speaking sincerely as well as affably. "As to plans for the future, I can hardly say anything. Perhaps the people, as the Squire and Mr. Flint have endeavored to do, can give me some valuable aid. Now, my young friends, you know me pretty well; perhaps you can tell me what business I should follow."

"Let Flora speak," said Jane, with the usual toss of her head and mischievous glance. "She has considered the matter; she can tell. Ask her, Mr. Branley."

"Miss Flora," said Mr. Branley, in his pleasantest manner, "I am commanded to appeal to you. Please say what profession or business I should choose."

"Mr. Branley," Flora replied, "I can say nothing, decide nothing, until I ascertain your tastes and abilities. Are you ready for an examination?"

"O! an examination is not necessary," interposed Jane. "Let Flora say what she would like; that will decide the question at once and forever; Mr. Branley is sure to make her choice his own."

"But suppose, Miss Jane, I have no choice, what then?" Flora paused and listened for a response. None came; and, resuming with the air of an independent thinker, she said, "I rather differ from some of the old gentlemen who sit in the other room. As a rule, men give character to professions and business: professions and business do not give character to men. A good man, whether a lawyer, doctor, minister, farmer or mechanic, will adorn his place and make it respectable." Flora paused again, listened, but heard nothing; in fact, all who sat around were waiting for her to proceed. She continued; assuming the air of a moral philosopher, "I tell you, Jane, that, in estimating the worth of men, I look at themselves,—that is, at their intellectual and moral qualities, and not at their avocations."

"You are a lucky man," Jane cried, addressing the teacher. "Flora will be pleased with anything. You can choose freely. You can be a lawyer, or a farmer, or anything else, provided—do you hear, Mr. Branley?—provided you have good morals."

The conversation was insensibly drifting from Mr. Branley's choice of a profession to Miss Flora's choice of a husband; and Miss Mary Campbell inquired,

"Flora, if your suitor had a little money, would it not recommend him?"

"Not much; not much, or none at all, in comparison with certain personal endowments."

"Flora, you are ambitious—indeed, more so than any of us," Mary rejoined. "Would you not like to have a fine house and live in style?"

"I would like to have a pretty cottage. If it had

large rooms, window shutters, and a portico, I certainly would not object. I would like" —

"Are you paying attention, Mr. Branley?" Jane inquired.

"I would like to have many books and pictures. I would like to have a large back yard, and a front yard still larger, with an abundance of shrubbery."

"Including roses," Mr. Branley ventured to add.

"O, you are wrong, Mr. Branley," cried Jane. "Flora does not like roses. She is jealous of them. She thinks that, when we were on the lake last summer, you looked at her rose, and not at her."

"Jane, you are wrong," affirmed Miss McConnell. "Mr. Branley just pretended to look at the rose. He was really looking at Flora all the time, and she knows all this perfectly."

"Here is a fine controversy between two girls," remarked Miss Van Arsdale. "Who can settle it? Can you, Flora?"

The girl to whom the question was addressed, answered promptly, and spoke decisively.

"I am not jealous of roses. I should be very much surprised if our teacher did not look at roses and admire them. As for the object which attracts and charms him most, that is for Mr. Branley, and not for me, to tell."

"Mr. Branley," said Miss Van Arsdale, "Flora has done her part in settling this controversy. Are you ready to do yours? Please tell us what you look at and admire."

The young man to whom this appeal was made did not answer promptly. He reflected awhile. The company waited and listened. At length he spoke; and he said more than was anticipated by his gay young friends.

"Ladies, I do not see that you have a right to inquire into my private affairs. However, I like to please you,

and will speak with all candor. I look at roses and at rosy lasses, and admire both. No doubt, when we were on the lake, my eyes wandered a little: sometimes I looked at the rose; and sometimes I looked at the wearer. To-night, no roses are seen, and the rosy lasses necessarily engage my attention. If any one should ask, 'Which do you admire most — the roses or the rosy lasses?' I must say that the animate object is far more interesting than the inanimate. But, ladies, you must not imagine that beauty so frail and transitory as that of the rose and the rosy maiden, engrosses my thoughts. A bright, soaring mind, supplied with knowledge, elevated by noble sentiments, guided by divine principles, is beautiful — at the same time, fadeless; and I admire it very much. A good heart — a heart that is sincere, pure, affectionate, true and faithful, showing itself in the light of the eyes, in the expression of the face, even in the pressure of the hand, and in the gentle ministries of Christian life, is the most beautiful and precious of all beautiful and precious things. I admire such a heart; I love it; I prize it exceedingly."

As Branley proceeded with his statement he grew serious, and he closed it with much apparent earnestness and solemnity. His seriousness impressed and sobered the whole company. The young people, desiring to change the subject of conversation, began to talk about the end of the school. And the teacher invited his young friends to visit the school-house on the last day, and witness the closing scenes and exercises.

Mr. Branley enjoyed the party. He was treated with marked respect and kindness, not only by the host and hostess, but by all the guests, old and young. Then, Flora Calvert was present, and every rival, real or imagined, was absent. Nor did Flora seem to have a thought about any absent one. She was sociable and cheerful, as

if fully satisfied with her company. She was not, indeed, so light and gay as she had been on other occasions ; but Branley just inferred that the presence of so large a number of elderly people put a slight restraint on her exuberant nature. He saw nothing but affability and kindness ; and he began to assure himself of success as the lover of Flora Calvert. "Soon, pretty soon," he thought, "I will make a declaration, and learn my destiny."

Near the close of the evening Dr. Marsden happened to pass among the young people, and, observing the teacher as he sat with his young friends and appeared to be very happy, remarked, in his pleasant way,

"Mr. Branley, I presume you are not now sorry that, a year and a half ago, you accepted our school at twelve dollars a month."

The young man could not, and did not, say that he was sorry. He felt that the triumph and pleasure enjoyed this evening were an ample compensation for all past disappointment, vexation and toil.

The party, however, brought before Mr. Branley's mind an important matter, — the choice of a profession or business. He had been attracted to the law ; but when he attended the academy in town, and acquired, personally, a little more knowledge of lawyers and courts, that profession, especially in some of its aspects, began to be slightly repulsive. The discussion which occurred between Squire Bluffton and Mr. Flint suggested a great question, and awakened thought as well as supplied amusement, but gave him no decided impulse in one direction or another. He reflected that the Squire might be limited in his knowledge or prejudiced in his feelings ; and he knew that Mr. Flint was accustomed to speak in a serio-comic manner, and could not have been serious and candid in all his statements. The young man resolved to watch, inquire, learn, judge and decide for himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAILURE.

THE school closed prosperously and happily. Both parties, the teacher and his patrons, were satisfied. During the last week, many persons came forward and paid their subscriptions; and, on the last day, others presented themselves with their money. Mr. Branley began to think that he could go home without any troublesome delay.

The closing exercises were very similar to those of the preceding year. There was an address from the teacher. There was a formal, kind parting between the teacher and the scholars. There was, however, a difference between this closing day and the previous one. A large number of young people were present as spectators. Some had been invited by the teacher. Others came without invitations. All received a hearty welcome. It is highly probable that the young folks attended, not only to see the close of the school, but to honor Mr. Branley, the hero of Konneautt Lake, who was about to leave the neighborhood. Flora Calvert was among the visitors.

The school was dismissed, and the children began to retire. But the young men and women remained, some sitting, others standing in groups, all, or nearly all, talking and laughing. Possibly, two or three were more thoughtful, if not more sad, than they were merry. At a moment when Flora happened to be sitting alone, Mr. Branley walked up hastily and said,

"Miss Flora, I am going to see the lake for the last time. Will you be so kind as to come along with me and help me to look at it?"

Flora did not answer. She did not look at him. She did not raise her head, which had been drooping. Indeed, her face showed trouble, perplexity, or something unusual. The young man looked into her face, and was troubled too. In fact, he felt, at once, great disappointment and great alarm. He had expected a cheerful and prompt acceptance of his invitation. "What is the matter?" was a silent inquiry. "Is she afraid of me? — afraid that I will talk seriously? — afraid that I will make an important proposal?" He waited a few seconds, and then said, in tones that expressed pretty strong emotion,

"Flora, will you come?"

"O yes," she replied, rising up in haste, and adjusting her shawl and bonnet.

It was a fine spring day; the snow and ice were gone; and the air was warm and pleasant. All of the young people resolved to take a walk and look at the water. Some followed one path among the elder bushes, and some followed another. Mr. Branley and Miss Calvert followed a path that suited themselves. They did not talk. Flora had nothing to say, and Branley had too much. The girl's face still expressed uneasiness, and the young man had not yet recovered from his alarm. As they walked, Mr. Branley had, at one point, a full view of the lake. He shuddered. He recalled two events, — his fall on the ice, with his escape from a fearful danger, and his advance, over water fifty or a hundred feet deep, to the very edge of the thin, crumbling ice, in his effort to save a drowning man. Branley had been brave when bravery was needed; but now, when there was no call for courageous effort, he shuddered whenever he looked at the water. But the young man said nothing about the events which had recurred so forcibly to his mind. Very soon another matter engrossed all his thoughts.

"See, Flora," said Mr. Branley, "here is a nice seat. Let us sit down and look at the lake."

They sat down on a smooth log.

"Do you see that bird?" Branley inquired, as he pointed towards a gull floating on the water.

"Yes," Flora replied, "and I see another not far away."

"Two united by the strongest ties is the law of animated nature," Branley murmured, as if speaking to himself. He had thoughts which were not expressed, even in murmurs. "Two on the water, — they have no fear or trouble at all; two on the shore, — O that confidence and sympathy were established between them!"

"Flora, Flora, see yonder birds!" the young man suddenly exclaimed, with feelings of surprise and delight.

The girl looked, and saw a large flock of swans. When first observed, the flock was high in the air and far away.

"They are flying to their northern home," Branley remarked.

"I wish they would call for me," the young woman said, with a tone and manner that seemed almost serious.

"Whither would you go?" inquired the surprised young man.

"To the northern lakes — anywhere."

"O Flora, what do you mean? Are you tired of Konneautt Lake and the people here, and — and — of every body and every thing?"

She made no reply. Meanwhile the swans were coming directly over the lake. Suddenly, the flock wheeled and began to descend.

"See!" Branley exclaimed, with much animation, "they are going to alight on the water." Then, after a little pause, he added, with a strange blending of the playful with the serious manner, "Perhaps they are coming for you, Flora."

Branley and his companion watched the swans with almost boundless admiration and delight. A more beautiful spectacle was never seen. The great white birds, resplendent in the sunshine, numbering a hundred or more, in marvelous order, and floating on expanded, motionless wings, swept around in wide but ever-diminishing circles, descended, like visitors from a higher world, and finally settled on the water, causing, for a second or two, foam and sparkle over a wide area.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the young man.

"Beautiful!" repeated the young woman.

"Flora, of what do the swans remind you?" the young man inquired. "Did they not seem like a convoy of angels?"

"I wish they were angels," she replied, speaking in a tone that startled the youth who was listening. "I wish they would come for me, and soar away."

"Whither would you go?" he ventured to ask.

"To the better country."

"O Flora, are you weary of life? Is there nothing here to be loved and enjoyed? Should you not be willing to stay awhile, and bless the world, and bless"—The power of utterance failed, and he left the sentence unfinished.

She was silent. The swans were now forgotten. The young man, during these really painful moments, was endeavoring to approach the subject which filled his mind and heart. Was he encouraged? No. He was excited, distressed, almost dismayed. He had never seen Flora Calvert in a state of mind so strange and unaccountable. And he now felt that her face, her words, her tones of voice, were ominous, portending almost certain defeat, with its great, overwhelming sorrow. But the young man had advanced, and he would not retreat.

"Flora," Mr. Branley inquired, "do you remember

that, about eighteen months ago, I sat on this log and you passed by on that path?"

"I remember," she answered in cheerful tones, as if pleased with the reminiscence. "I was looking for our cattle which had run away, and given us some trouble."

"Did you know that, ever since that time, I have loved this log, and have often come here to sit, and to think about the girl who passed by on that path?"

"I did not, Mr. Branley."

"Did you know that, ever since that time, the image of Flora Calvert was impressed on my heart?"

"I cannot say that I did, Mr. Branley."

"Flora, I have purposely brought you to this place. Here I first saw you, and here I wish to make a solemn declaration. Will you let me take your hand?"

She offered no resistance. He took her hand, held it firmly, and proceeded.

"Flora, I solemnly declare that, ever since I sat here and you passed there, I have admired and loved you."

He looked at the girl. Her head was drooping; and she was silent.

"Flora," said Mr. Branley, "I have not been a troublesome suitor. I have never obtruded my love. Indeed, I thought, for a long time, that others had prior and better claims to your regard; and I stood at a distance, gazed, admired, and loved, but with scarcely a hope. During a long period I made no effort to win your heart: I offered my distant, silent homage, — that was all. But, Flora, I do not now see that any one stands between us. I do not see why I may not profess my love, and ask yours in return. I speak now because I am about to leave this neighborhood, and I am most anxious to learn your will and pleasure before I go. I am not fast — not unreasonable, I think, in asking a decisive answer. For months, if not for the whole year and a half, you must have known

that I loved you, and you must have expected a declaration: you must, therefore, be prepared to settle my fate. Flora, may I claim this hand? Will you give me the right to clasp you in my arms?"

She said nothing. He looked into her face. Tears were flowing down her cheeks. There were indications of great distress.

"Flora," he continued, "I have never said a word for myself. Let me say a word now. I belong to a respectable family. I have good habits. I never used a profane word in my life. I use no tobacco. I drink no whiskey. I never associate with bad people. As far as I know, I have a sound body and a sound mind. I have a little money, and I have industry and energy. The Omniscient God knows that I speak the truth. And now, all that I am, with all that I possess, is offered to you."

He paused, and listened for some reply. He heard no words at all; but he distinctly heard sobs. The young man proceeded.

"Flora, I do not propose immediate marriage. I do not wish to take you from your mother just now. We are too young to marry. I am twenty-two, and you are eighteen. We can afford to wait awhile. Then, I have no place for you now; but I am sure that, in the course of a year or two, I can provide a suitable home. O, if you would say, Yes, how cheerfully and energetically I would go to work and make all needful preparations! The thought and labor employed in preparing a pleasant home for you would be blessedness itself. Flora, will you consent to be my wife?"

He pressed her hand; he waited; he listened; but he heard nothing except the sobs.

"Flora, will you not speak? Do say something, I beseech you. Say yes or say no. I cannot endure this

suspense. It is killing me. And distress of some kind is killing you. Speak, and settle the question now and for all time."

Not a word did she say. But her whole frame trembled, and her weeping continued, even with increasing violence. Mr. Branley's disappointment was great, but he soon almost forgot it in his sympathy for the girl who wept at his side. Her distress filled his heart with insupportable anguish.

"Flora," he said, "don't weep. I will leave you; I will trouble you no more. For some reason unknown to me you cannot give me your love—you cannot be my wife. Well, until recently I never had much hope. Recently, indeed, I began to be hopeful, and even confident; but I must have been foolish; I should have expected failure. Well, the delusion is past now. And though I have lost or missed a great treasure and a great joy, I shall not be crushed and destroyed by the weight of my sorrow. It has been my determination, all the time, to be a man, to serve God, to be useful, and, whatever may come, to be as happy as possible. And now, Flora, let us part. The sooner we part the better it will be; for this distress is too great for us to bear. My departure will relieve you of your trouble; and time and employment, I trust, will relieve me of mine. Come, Flora, let us go."

They rose up, and returned slowly towards the school-house. Flora recovered her calmness; but they continued their walk in silence. As they approached the school-house, where the other young people were now re-assembling, Mr. Branley whispered to Flora,

"We need not part in anger. O no; let us part as very good friends. We may not meet again; but I am sure that I will not forget you, Flora; and I think that you will not forget me."

"Certainly, I will not forget you, Mr. Branley," Flora said, speaking in a firm and cheery manner.

The young man was inexpressibly glad when he heard her speak again. And the thought that Flora would not forget him was balm to his wounded heart. He took her hand, pressed it tenderly, and looked at her once more. Her cheeks were still wet with tears ; but a glorious smile lit up her face. O that such a face and such a smile could be seen no more ! Mr. John Branley and Miss Flora Calvert parted ; and they parted, as they thought, forever.

CHAPTER XX.

A WEDDING.

IT is strange how people meet, form attachments, and marry. In many cases a mere accident brings young folks together, and the accidental meeting results in a union for life. However, it frequently happens that design, on the part of some one, secures the first meeting and the consequent marriage. Sometimes accident and design seem to coöperate and lead to the interesting result.

Charley Calvert and Tom McConnell had negotiated, somewhat seriously, especially on Tom's side, for an exchange of sisters. For reasons that need not be stated the negotiations failed : Charley Calvert did not marry Caroline McConnell, and Tom McConnell did not marry Flora Calvert. No offense was given or taken by any one of the young people concerned : all remained on good terms ; Charley and Tom, in particular, continued to be warm friends. In fact, their early scheme having been abandoned, these two young men deliberately aided each other in finding and securing life companions. The girls

found and captured were not entire strangers; but they could not be classed with old, intimate acquaintances.

One day, Charley saw Tom passing, and hailed him. Tom stopped, and, according to custom, leaned against the fence. Charles approached him and began to talk.

"Tom," remarked Charles, "we have some visitors. They are our cousins. Come in and see them, and get acquainted."

"I do not like to speak to strangers," said Tom.

"O, you need not regard them as strangers. They are our friends, and they are just like ourselves. You know us pretty well, and need not be afraid of them. Besides, you have heard of them before. Come in, Tom."

Tom complied, entered the house, and was introduced to James Dilworth and his sister. It happened that Tom called next day, and had a pleasant chat with Mary Dilworth. It happened that, two weeks afterwards, Tom rode ten miles and saw Mary at home. And it happened that Tom had the same ride, every two or three weeks, during a period of three or four months.

Tom McConnell passed Mrs. Calvert's again; and, on this occasion, he called Charles. Tom leaned against the fence, and Charles came up promptly, wondering what his friend had to say. Tom did not permit him to wonder very long.

"Charles," said the young man, blushing and stammering, "I wish to tell you something. I am going to get married. I am going to marry your cousin Mary. You will not object—will you? I want you and Flora to attend the wedding."

"I am glad, very glad," exclaimed Charles. "Mary is truly a good girl. She will suit you exactly. I wish I had your good luck."

"Come to the wedding, Charley, and perhaps you will

have the same good luck. I am sure I am ready to help you."

The young men parted. Tom turned about and went in the direction of home. Charles, the recipient of good news, ran into the house and communicated the news to Flora. She was delighted — delighted with Tom's prospective marriage, and with her own prospect as one of the guests.

"Will you attend the wedding, sis?" Charles inquired.

"Certainly," Flora responded, with emphasis. "Certainly, if you find me a horse. But, Charley, you must find a spry one — one that will keep up with the fastest horse in the crowd."

"With whom will you ride, sis?"

"I do not know, but it will be somebody who will not be left behind, I assure you."

"Well, I can find the horse," Charley said, "but I am not sure that I can find the partner."

Tom McConnell's wedding-day arrived. Henry Stafford called it the "great day Tom." A large company was engaged to start from McConnell's. Charles and Flora Calvert were there at the appointed hour, sitting on the backs of superb horses, and ready for a gallop. Flora had been accustomed to horses from her early childhood, and was perfectly fearless. She sat erect on her prancing steed, holding the reins firmly. Her face, figure and carriage, looked like the face, figure and carriage of a queen. Some fancied that she was proud and imperious that day. Some pretended to think that she was vain, and trying to win attention. However all really admired Flora Calvert. But while this girl was so bold and fearless, other girls, who had seldom or never been on horseback, were exceedingly timid; and these timid creatures, piteously pleading, "O don't ride fast," were placed in their saddles by a little gentle force. No

lady had a riding-habit ; and only a few of the gentlemen wore boots.

The horses did not make a grand and impressive show. They were of all sizes, colors and qualities. Some were good, but many were bad ; some were too old, and others were too young ; some had shoes, and others had none ; a few were well-trained, but some had no training at all.

Flora Calvert had not yet secured a partner. Charles was near ; but the young men had a fair opportunity to advance and offer their services. Flora looked around, and seemed to dare the "bravest of the brave" to dash forward and obtain the honor of a position at her side. None made any movement. The young men seemed to be afraid—afraid that she would reject their offer, or afraid that her steed would distance theirs, and leave them in disgrace and humiliation.

Tom McConnell, perhaps to honor himself and make a good impression on Mary's friends, had chosen Henry Stafford, the man of noble presence, polished manners and brilliant wit, to be the "groom's man." In proceeding to the home of the bride, it was the duty of the groom's man to ride with the groom. Just as Stafford was about to mount his horse, he turned and gazed at Flora Calvert. Did he admire the girl? Was he sorry that he could not ride with her? Well, his conduct was rather significant. Having mounted, Stafford rode past Flora, and remarked, in low tones,

"I am sorry that custom requires me to ride with the groom."

"Custom is law," responded the girl.

"Yes," said Stafford, "but custom is often very absurd ; and even when not so, it may be very inconvenient and annoying."

Nothing more was said, and Stafford, riding forward, took the place which custom assigned him.

Some of the girls, observing Flora's situation and Stafford's movement, had a little chat among themselves.

"Flora is in a predicament; she has no partner," said Miss Van Arsdale. "I am sorry that Stafford cannot ride with her. I am sure that he is bold enough to offer his services; and I am sure that he would not be left behind."

"I wish Mr. Branley was here," said Miss Folsom. "Certainly, he would offer himself instantly. Certainly, he would kill his horse, or break his own neck, rather than see Flora get far ahead."

"I am rather glad," remarked Miss Campbell, "that Flora has no partner, she is so proud. I guess she will get none."

"I wonder why Mr. Branley does not show himself this summer, as he did last summer," Miss Folsom observed, paying no attention to Miss Campbell's unkind remark. "The lake is as pretty as ever; Flora is as pretty as ever; and we should all be glad to see him."

"Flora knows, I think," said Miss Van Arsdale. "I suspect she does not wish to see him, and he knows it. If Branley could not bask in the light of Flora's eyes, he could see no beauty in all this country, — even the lake would have no attraction for him."

"I wonder why Flora does not like Mr. Branley," Miss Folsom remarked, speaking quite seriously. "I am sure I like him. Don't you, Sarah?"

"Everybody likes him," the other replied. "I believe that Flora likes him, though she may not wish to encourage his attentions."

Tom McConnell was satisfied with his party. He had good reason to be. The party embraced the choice young people of a large neighborhood. Henry Stafford, the handsomest, the wittiest, the most popular, young man in the country, was the groom's waiter. Then, Flora

Calvert, though not to be the bride, adorned his retinue, and would surely give lustre to his wedding.

At length the word was given, and the party began to move. Charles Calvert, departing from custom, rode with his sister. The young people started on a canter. Mirth abounded. There was some talk, and there was very much laughter. Sometimes, when a horse stumbled, there was a little scream. Once, when a girl rode too near a bush and lost her bonnet, there was a general shout. The canter was not long maintained by all; and the company could scarcely be kept together. While some of the horses, becoming excited, were disposed to run at their highest speed, others, growing tired or lazy, were disposed to walk or stop entirely. Consequently, some of the party were compelled to hold back their horses, and others were compelled to use the "raw-hide" vigorously, in order to prevent unseemly dispersion or straggling.

When Tom and his friends had proceeded seven or eight miles, they discovered, on an eminence two or three hundred yards distant, a party that closely resembled their own. It was the bride's party, coming to meet the groom's party and escort it to the bride's home. The bride's party halted, and awaited the approach of the other. As the groom's party ascended the hill, the bride's party divided, the gentlemen taking one side of the road and the ladies taking the other side, thus forming two ranks and leaving an intervening space; the groom and his friends passed between the ranks, exchanging smiles and salutations with the friends of the bride; then the bride's party wheeled, closed the ranks, and moved with the party in front. The two parties now formed one party, proceeded rapidly, and soon reached the end of the short, pleasant journey.

The marriage ceremony was soon performed. But the officiating clergyman asked questions and employed words

which, it is said, are omitted at the present time. He addressed this question to the bridegroom: "Do you know any reason, by previous contract or otherwise, why you cannot lawfully marry this woman?" A corresponding question was addressed to the bride. Afterwards, the clergyman, having asked the bridegroom an important question and receiving an affirmative answer, asked the bride an important question, which closed thus: "And do you promise to be to him a loving, faithful and *obedient* wife?"

It must be confessed that the Apostle Paul is losing his authority, even with people who profess to receive the whole Bible as the word of God. Paul said, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Some women declare that Paul's theory of the relation between a husband and wife is founded on ignorance and barbarism; while a greater number, whatever they may think of his doctrine in the abstract, entirely reject it in practice. The strong-minded and aspiring ladies are urging their claims most strenuously, and are making some progress in the advancement of their views. Some interesting questions present themselves. Where will the agitators stop? When will they be satisfied? Will the possession of "equal rights" give them full content? Perhaps, to satisfy them fully, the question addressed to the bridegroom must be this: "Do you promise to be to this woman a loving, faithful and *obedient* husband?"

A great dinner followed the marriage ceremony. Promenading and romping in the yard, and ball playing in the meadow, followed the dinner. When night came, the guests filled the house, and engaged in the customary plays—possibly, had some music and dancing. All appeared to enjoy the "great day Tom."

At a certain time in the evening, as Charles Calvert

was passing the bride, he saw a young lady standing beside her chair. The bride arose and said, "Cousin Charles, I make you acquainted with Miss Semple." Was this meeting an accident? Or was it designed? No matter. Mr. Charles Calvert and Miss Lydia Semple met, were introduced to each other, and had a pleasant time. Lydia was a very young girl, with a slender figure, light hair, and a very fair complexion. She was as timid as a fawn. A look directed towards her, even by a lady, made her shrink, as if she wished to vanish from sight. A word addressed to her by any one, but, especially, a word addressed by a gentleman, made blushes and confusion. She conversed, when she was able to converse at all, in monosyllables; and her list usually comprised these two, yes and no. Yet discerning people saw that she had mind and heart. At least, Charles Calvert was soon convinced that Lydia possessed all human excellence.

As soon as Tom had an opportunity to speak to Charles privately, he said,

"Charley, how do you like Miss Semple?"

"Much, very much," he replied. "She is nice; she is charming."

"Well, I have just this to say," Tom remarked: "Lydia is a very good girl, as I am assured by Mary, who knows her well. Your success, I think, is certain. Now, Charley, is not your luck about as good as mine?"

"Thank you! thank you, my old friend," Charles exclaimed, grasping McConnell's hand and pressing it warmly. "I know that to you and Mary I am indebted for this new and delightful acquaintance. A thousand thanks to you and Cousin Mary."

At ten o'clock next day forty horses stood before Mr. Dilworth's house. Twenty young men and twenty young women stood or walked about, preparing to mount the horses and ride away. Of course, Mr. Stafford, the

groom's man, was required to ride with Miss Booth, the bride's maid. But Stafford passed Flora Calvert and remarked, in low tones,

"I am sorry that I cannot choose my own partner."

"You have a very nice partner, Mr. Stafford," said Flora.

"Yes," he responded, "but I might have a nicer one."

"Sarah Booth is a splended girl," said Flora, speaking with emphasis.

"Yes," he remarked, "but she is not my choice. Fortunately, I shall soon be at liberty to choose for myself."

As Stafford left, Charles came up and whispered,

"Flora, you must find a partner for yourself; I cannot ride with you to day."

"I can easily find a partner," she replied; "many are offering themselves now; the trouble is to make a choice."

She made a choice, accepting the offer tendered by Mr. George Semple. But Flora looked around to see what fortune had provided for her brother. Charles was leading forward Miss Semple. The youth was talking and the maiden was blushing; but neither of them looked unhappy.

The young men and their partners now stood beside the horses. Each gentleman helped his partner to secure her seat, held the stirrup while she placed her foot properly, put the reins in her hands, then mounted and took the required position. The party started on a gallop; but the gallop soon became a trot; and the trot speedily became a walk.

The experience of this day was very different from the experience of the preceding one. The party entered a long lane, and, advancing with good speed, made a discovery which caused much surprise and a little dismay. Near the end of the lane, a huge barricade, reaching from fence to fence, obstructed the road. Obstacles thrown in the way of a wedding party were common;

but this barricade was something really marvelous. It looked as if all the surrounding fields and woods had been ransacked for building material. It looked as if a little army had been employed for hours, if not for days, in piling logs, roots, saplings and brush. When the party came to the barricade, a full stop was unavoidable. Some of the young people felt annoyed, and uttered complaints. Others, however, seemed to be pleased: at any rate, they laughed heartily. But a serious question presented itself and demanded a prompt answer. "What is to be done?" The young men looked around. A high, heavy fence stood on each side of the road. Corn grew in one of the fields; wheat grew in the other. They had no wish to commit a trespass, and expose themselves to a prosecution for damages. They very soon resolved, not to pass through a field, but to remove a part of the obstruction. They dismounted hastily, handed the reins of their bridles to the girls, and went to work with a sort of frenzy and fury. They cleared a passage, mounted their horses, rode through the barricade, and proceeded in triumph, thinking, no doubt, that the supervisor might finish the work which they had begun.

Entering the wood, the party heard a tremendous shout or hurra. Presently, the forest seemed to be alive with animals, or Indians, or creatures of some kind, running, leaping, rolling, gesticulating wildly, and making terrific noises. Cries mingled with cries; peals followed peals, like sharp claps of thunder; and the young folks almost expected to see the great oaks shivered, scattered, and falling everywhere. Well, the mischievous fellows who erected the barricade were just looking at the wedding party, and enjoying the fruits of their labor.

The party soon experienced another and a more serious trouble. Five men, each carrying a gun, walked into the road, deployed, and faced the approaching cavalcade.

One of the men fired, making a loud report. Many horses were affrightened. Some reared, some plunged forward, others wheeled and endeavored to run back. Happily, all the girls were able to keep their seats.

"This is dangerous business," said one of the young men.

"It is barbarous, wicked business," said one of the girls.

"Mother knew a woman who was killed in such circumstances as these," another girl remarked, with a trembling voice.

Meanwhile Stafford, who was, or pretended to be, very angry, rode up to the men and ordered them to leave the road.

"Who are you?" one of them cried. "We know our own business."

"I know my business too," Stafford said, sternly, "and I order you to move."

"Your business," said the impudent man, "is to treat us. Where's the bottle?"

"I have no bottle," Stafford replied, "and if I had one you should not see it. I thought beasts of prey," he continued, in tones which suited his words, "came out of their dens only at night. Shall I have to use my whip and drive you back to your den?"

"Shall I have to use a bullet and stop your insults?" cried the other, slapping his hand on his pouch and making a rattle. Stafford did not often show anger; but he was angry now, really angry, even furious. A thunder-cloud covered his face, and lightnings blazed from his eyes.

"Get out of the way," he shouted, "or I'll ride over you."

The men raised their guns, as if about to fire, probably just to make a noise, possibly one of them intending to use a bullet.

"Don't fire ! don't fire !" cried many voices.

It was a critical moment. And at that moment a young man who had dismounted and was watching matters keenly, rushed between Stafford and the enemy, and held up a flask.

The men saw the sparkling liquor, lowered their guns, seized the flask, passing it from hand to hand, each taking a second dram. Then, returning the flask, which was nearly empty, they began to move away.

"Go on," said the impudent man, "we want nothing more."

"Go to your den," said Stafford, "and stay there."

The men walked away, muttering something that was not distinctly heard. The wedding party moved forward again.

"I want no more delays," said one of the young men. "I am hungry, and I want my dinner."

"I am very tired," said one of the girls, "and I want to rest."

The wedding party, especially that section which belonged to the bride's neighborhood, contained some wild and reckless men, who were accustomed to carry knives, and who, when tipsy or angry, were dangerous to friends and foes.

"If we meet another set of men with their guns, I know what I will do," said one of this class. "And I know what I will do," was the warlike remark of several others. Yet these young men, when they happened to be uninvited to a wedding, and felt a little mad, or, at least, a little thirsty, did not hesitate to confront the wedding party, fire off their guns, and imperil human life.

The party came to a considerable swamp. The road was very narrow, a dense and almost impenetrable thicket growing on each side. The young folks rode slowly and quietly. They were now near the lake, and they were

not far from Evansburgh. They were expecting that some powder would be exploded in the village, but had no thought of immediate danger. Suddenly, four or five men emerged from the thicket, stepped on the road in front, and fired their guns. In an instant four or five men, paying no attention to the horses or to the girls, sprang from their saddles, jerked knives from their pockets, and made a dash at the enemy. But the enemy, seeing the fierce onset, darted into the thicket and disappeared. The hot-blooded young men caught no assailant, and the thirsty assailants got no liquor. Panic and confusion reigned for a short time. Some of the horses made an effort to plunge into the marsh; but, fortunately, these were ridden by men, and were held back by strong arms.

The wedding-party passed through Evansburgh without annoyance, and reached McConnell's in safety. The bride received a hearty welcome from new friends. As usual, a great dinner was served. Merriment prevailed, wit sparkled, jokes abounded, and all were happy. Outdoor games and in-door plays occurred in their customary order. At a late hour the guests retired to rest, some finding it at home, and others finding it at neighboring houses.

The country wedding of modern times differs widely from the country wedding of early times. Perhaps neither can be entirely approved. In early times, while houses were small and accommodations very limited, a wedding was usually attended by a large number of guests. It frequently happened that guests and their horses were quartered, more or less, on generous neighbors. In modern times, a young man puts his girl into a carriage, rides to the house of a minister, gets married, and returns home. Or, desiring to make a show, he rides to town, stops at a hotel, sends for a clergyman, is

married, eats a dinner, and then returns home ; or, possibly, makes a little tour. A course avoiding these extremes might be best. Should not a marriage always take place at home—the home of one of the parties? Should not the marriage ceremony be witnessed by parents, brothers and sisters, and other near and dear friends? Might not a wedding be a joyful reunion of kindred, thus nourishing affection, and adding really and largely to the sum of human happiness?

The wedding was over, and the guests began to retire. Flora Calvert stood at the gate, waiting for Charles, who was whispering something to Miss Semple. Mr. Stafford approached and inquired,

"Flora, how did you enjoy the wedding?"

"Very much, indeed," she answered ; "it was fine."

"Yes, it was fine," Stafford said. Then, speaking in low tones, he asked, "But, Flora, could not we have a finer one?"

He did not wait for an answer ; but if he had waited he would have heard none, for the girl had no answer for such a question.

CHAPTER XXI.

A GIRL'S LIFE AND WORK.

Two or three years must be passed over rapidly. Yet these years were not uneventful. People moved away from the neighborhood of Konneautt Lake, and people moved into the neighborhood, and became permanent inhabitants. Many young people married, and made homes for themselves. There was much sickness at times ; and many people, old and young, passed away from the scenes and troubles of the present world.

Flora Calvert still lived with her mother. Much of her time was spent in the performance of household duties. Some of it, however, was spent in out-door work. During one of the sickly summers, she was often in the harvest-field as well as in the meadow, not, indeed, handling the sickle, as women and girls were accustomed to do in some quarters, but handling the rake, and helping in various ways. Flora spent a part of her time reading books and newspapers. The Evansburgh library, collected by Henry Stafford, and remaining as a memorial of his intelligence and enterprise, supplied her with many books, — histories, memoirs, romances, and others. Sometimes she borrowed a book from a neighbor; and sometimes she received one as a present from a thoughtful and generous friend. She was known as a reader. She was incomparably the most intelligent girl in the community.

Flora Calvert was still young, blooming and attractive; but she was no longer surrounded by flatterers and suitors; and her name was not often mentioned in connection with the subject of matrimony. Her bearing awed the young men; and, while they still admired her, they stood at a distance.

Good and sensible young men, failing to win Flora's love, gladly accepted her esteem, and remained her warm friends. But two or three vain young men, too keenly sensible that Flora regarded them with indifference or contempt, felt hurt and grew spiteful. They encouraged themselves to think that Flora was proud, and ought to be humbled. They encouraged themselves to believe that she had been unjust and cruel to certain young men, themselves included, and so deserved punishment. Then the injured and aggrieved men entered into a sort of conspiracy. They resolved to make the girl suffer for her pride and cruelty. They did not, as rejected suitors are

apt to do, attempt to stain her character: they simply persuaded Ike Kloster to present himself to Flora as her lover and wooer. They rightly judged that attention from a man so coarse and brutal as Ike would produce, in a delicate and refined nature, a feeling of the deepest humiliation; and they rightly judged that the resentment of such a man, when repulsed with scorn and loathing, would be a sore annoyance to a young woman, if not a just cause of alarm. Ike Kloster actually presented himself to Flora; and by his intolerable coarseness and effrontery, his persistence, and his occasional fits of anger, caused, for a year or two, the chief trouble of her life.

Flora Calvert began to exhibit a new phase of character. She had fully returned to the social world. But now, while sociable and cheerful, she preferred the companionship of elderly, sober people to that of the young and gay, and she went to the house of mourning rather than to the house of feasting. Apparently, she had dismissed the ideal world, and assumed the responsibilities of actual life. And, apparently, she lived, planned and worked, not so much for herself as for others. Whether the change in Flora's life resulted, in any degree, from a secret disappointment and sorrow, or resulted simply from an increase of knowledge and piety, was a point unsolved by friends and neighbors.

Mr. Bayne was now sick and helpless. The Overseers of the Poor were compelled to take charge of him. They separated him from his wife and daughters, leaving them to work for their bread, and, as the people remarked, "sold him to the lowest bidder." His utterly misspent life made him an object of contempt, and his filthy habits, growing worse every day, made him an object of loathing. And yet, one person called to see him now and then. One person spoke to him kindly. That person was a woman, even a young woman. Flora Calvert never

attended one of Mrs. Bayne's parties ; indeed, while feeling no respect for Mr. Bayne, she thoroughly despised his vain and foolish wife ; but now she pitied the lonely and miserable man, and even called to see him and speak a few cheery words. And whom did the pauper wish to see ? Not the frivolous and heartless woman whom he had once called wife ; not even the daughters from whom he had been forcibly separated, and who, possibly, had some more heart than their mother, — but the young woman who showed pity and kindness.

"Ministering spirits" are not always real angels or visitants from heaven. Sometimes they are women, who live among us here on earth. Flora Calvert was one who ministered in human form. A few of her noted ministries may be mentioned.

Little Phebe Osmer was taken ill. The mother was in distress, for Phebe was a dear pet. Who came most frequently to see the poor, suffering child ? Who often and earnestly tried to soothe the little one, watching it most kindly, and administering cordials with the utmost tenderness and care ? Who gave the most comfort to the anxious mother ? Flora Calvert. When Phebe died, Flora made the shroud, put the little form in the coffin, and shed tears with the mother, first over the coffin and then over the grave.

Willy Carson, a lad of sixteen, had the measles. When friends thought that he was past danger, he exposed himself and took a cold, the cold bringing a rapid consumption. Whose face did Willy like to see ? Whose face always made him glad ? Certainly, next to his mother's, Flora Calvert's face gave him the most pleasure. When Willy passed down into the valley and shadow of death, Flora held his hand, and her presence and words cheered him as he passed through the darkness and the terrors.

At one time a fever prevailed, prostrating whole

families. At another time an infectious disease, somewhat like the disease now called diphtheria, spread in the neighborhood, attacking adults as well as children. Many persons died. Courageous men sometimes quailed in the presence of these destroyers. Flora Calvert, though perhaps not absolutely fearless, walked resolutely into the smitten households, and ministered to the sufferers, giving medicine to some, nourishment to others, and words of cheer to all. Sometimes, too, sitting beside one who needed spiritual support and consolation, she read a chapter in the Good Book and sung a psalm or hymn.

The world contains women who seem to have misfortunes and troubles of almost every kind. Mrs. Purdy was one of that class. When she was a young, sprightly girl, she met a stranger, accepted his attentions, and soon married him. Purdy was a tall, handsome man; he had some intelligence; and he assumed to be a gentleman of the first rank. However, his bad qualities far more than balanced his good ones. He was a trifler, a spendthrift, a drunkard. Within the first year of married life, he fully surrendered himself to evil habits. He neglected his work, his house, and his wife, and became stupid and insensible. Mrs. Purdy would have been a good and happy wife if circumstances had been favorable; but she was too weak for her trying position. She bore much in silence; but sometimes she became impatient and fretful. It is highly probable that a woman possessing the largest measure of mental and moral strength and practical wisdom could have effected no improvement in such a man as Purdy. It is certain that his wife had no influence over him; indeed, in course of time, she ceased to make any effort to control his actions. Apparently, she sunk into a state of silent despair, though not into a state of inactivity. Neglected by her husband, overlooked by her friends, with fragile health, a wearied body and a sorrow-

ing heart, she toiled and struggled to support herself and her children. Her love for the little ones was very strong; and that love may have kept her alive.

One spring, Purdy left home professedly to seek work in a lumber region. He was absent several weeks. He sent no money to his wife. It was generally supposed that he did not earn very much; and it was generally supposed that, if he earned and received any money, it was spent for tobacco and whiskey.

One day, in the latter part of spring, Charles Calvert, returning home from a neighbor's house, made a startling announcement:

"Mrs. Purdy has the small-pox!"

Both Mrs. Calvert and her daughter uttered exclamations, and then were silent for a moment. "O poor Mrs. Purdy!" said Flora. But Mrs. Calvert thoughtfully inquired, "What is to be done?"

The report of Mrs. Purdy's case spread rapidly. The whole community was thrown into a state of alarm; for small-pox was more dreaded than any other disease. Vaccination had not been introduced at that time. Some people had been inoculated; but many persons had not used any means of prevention or amelioration. Even those who had been inoculated and were personally safe, were afraid to visit Mrs. Purdy, lest their clothes should absorb infection and carry it away. Meanwhile Mrs. Purdy, assailed by the loathsome and horrible disease, remained alone with her children.

"What is to be done?" Mrs. Calvert asked, addressing Charles and Flora. She repeated the question when she happened to meet a neighbor. The reply ever was, "I do not know."

"Something must be done," Mrs. Calvert said, addressing her children. "Mrs. Purdy must be nursed, and her children must be removed. I will see the woman and

bring away the little ones. We have been inoculated, and need not be much afraid ; but I will be careful not to bring away the disease."

"Mother," said Charles, "the children may have the disease now."

"I trust not," she replied ; "but I must see them before I conclude to bring them away."

Mrs. Calvert went to Purdy's miserable cabin, saw the sick woman, spoke some encouraging words, and gave some needed attentions. The children appeared to be perfectly well.

"We must take away the children," said the kind visitor, speaking very gently. "If we remove them, they may be saved from an attack ; if they remain here, nothing can save them."

"As you think best," said the mother, after a little thought and struggle.

Mrs. Calvert changed the clothing of the children as far as was practicable, and was ready to lead them away. Mrs. Purdy could not give them a parting kiss. She durst not touch their hands. She could not at all caress her baby boy, who was just able to walk and to speak a few words. She looked at them affectionately and yearningly : she could do no more. When the little ones had passed beyond her sight, she moaned, and said to herself, "Will I ever see my children again? What will become of them if I should die?"

Mrs. Calvert nursed the sick woman day and night. Flora attended to matters at home, watching over Mrs. Purdy's children, besides discharging the duties of house-keeper. One morning Mrs. Calvert returned home utterly exhausted ; and, having changed her apparel, sunk down on her bed. Flora was alarmed, and looked earnestly into her mother's face.

"Have you taken the disease, mother?"

"O no, dear. But I am worn out. I can do nothing more at present. What is to be done now, daughter?"

Flora did not instantly reply. She reflected a moment. Her earnest thinking soon brought decisive results.

"Mother, I will go," said the noble girl.

"O my dear daughter, you must not go!" exclaimed the mother, raising herself on the bed, and looking at Flora, whose face expressed anything rather than irresolution. "Dear daughter, you must not go," the old lady repeated. "You were inoculated," she continued, "but I am not sure there was any effect. The pustule did not form properly."

"Mother, look here," said the young heroine, showing her bare arm. "A mark, you know, proves that the process has been effective; and here is the mark."

The old lady looked at the beautiful arm. It was white, round and smooth. But aided by her spectacles, and guided by Flora's fingers, she discerned the least and slightest of all discernible scars. Still she felt unwilling that Flora should be exposed to any danger.

"I will return," said the mother, "rather than permit you to go. We cannot be sure that you would be safe."

Mrs. Calvert made an attempt to rise and stand on her feet. Her face assumed an unnatural whiteness; she trembled exceedingly; and now, unable to walk, or even to stand, she sunk back on her bed, ejaculating,

"The Lord guide and protect us!"

"The Lord *will* guide and protect us," the daughter said, with emphasis. "Mother, you are not able to go now. Let me go. Fanny will be here to-day, and will help in the house. Shall we allow Mrs. Purdy to suffer and die alone? May I not go, mother?"

The mother said nothing. She was afraid to say, Yes. She was even more afraid to say, No. Offering a silent prayer, she resolved to leave the matter with Flora her-

self and her God. The girl understood her mother's thoughts, and prepared for the service which she had in view.

"Mother," said Flora, "I am going. I will return as soon as I can be spared."

"Use all care," Mrs. Calvert said; and then, feeling the need of divine care, she murmured, "The Lord take care of my child!"

Charles was standing near, and, looking after his sister, exclaimed;

"O mother, I would be sorry if that smooth, pretty face should be pitted with small-pox."

The old lady made no reply; but she certainly felt that, if that pretty face, or even those pretty arms, should be covered with scars, there would be cause for grief. But a thought of the most solemn nature rose in her mind: "What if death should seize our Flora!"

The young heroine walked away rapidly. The grass was growing and the birds were singing, for it was a morning in May; but she scarcely saw the beautiful green, and she scarcely heard the gladsome music. She was thinking about the lonely, suffering woman.

Flora reached the cabin, knocked at the door, and heard a weak voice say, "Come in." She entered boldly. The sick woman looked up; her eyes expressed surprise and wonder, and her heart must have throbbed with unbounded gratitude. Several persons had called at the door, after Mrs. Calvert's departure, but none had entered the house. Flora looked around, opened the door and window, and gave the room a thorough airing, washed the floor, improved the hard bed a little, gave the prescribed medicines and drinks, — in a word, performed, with the utmost care, the duties of a nurse. And this care and nursing continued through the day and the night.

Next morning, Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Patton knocked at the sick woman's door. When they saw Flora Calvert, they stood amazed. Feeling a sharp reproof, they said to themselves, "Why, Flora is here and in the house, working and nursing, and we have been afraid to come near." These two women looked upon the girl as an angel of mercy in the house of suffering and death. They had the strongest assurance that Flora did not work for pay; and they never ceased to praise her in after-time.

"Come in," said Flora, "and speak to Mrs. Purdy."

They entered the house, and looked at the sick woman. They shuddered, spoke a few words, and sat down.

"Will you stay," Flora asked, "while I run home and see the folks? We have the children at our house, and they may be taking the disease. Mother was quite ill or worn out yesterday, and I am concerned about her."

The women agreed to stay. As Flora was about to leave, she noticed Mrs. Purdy beckoning her. She stepped to the bedside. The sick woman opened her eyes as well as the disease would permit her, gazed intently at Flora for a few moments, and then said, with apparent effort,

"My babies!" And while her whole frame shook with emotion, she added, "I will never see them again!"

Flora turned away in tears. Mrs. Patton sobbed aloud; and the other woman was not much less affected. Flora soon recovered her calmness and said,

"Mrs. Purdy, don't be so despondent. I think you are getting better. You may see your babies again and be happy."

The two women rose, stepped forward, and remarked, kindly and tenderly,

"Surely you may get well and see your children again. Keep a good heart, Mrs. Purdy."

When Flora walked away, she felt very sorry for poor

Mrs. Purdy. The tender-hearted girl was destined to have another trial of the feelings. Mrs. Purdy's children had learned or heard that Flora would return in the morning. Early in the day, they went to the front gate, stood, or walked about, and watched for her. They waited and looked, as they must have thought, a long time. At length, the children saw Flora coming, and ran to meet her, each one having a question to ask or something to say.

"How is mother?" asked Bessy.

"Why didn't you fetch mamma?" cried Mary.

"I want my mamma," little Tommy said as well as he could.

Flora was deeply touched. However, she was glad to see that the children were still very well. She comforted them, and led them back to the house. She had the great pleasure of seeing that her mother had no illness, and had quite recovered from her fatigue. While meeting a trial which had not been foreseen, she was saved from a trial which had been greatly feared.

Flora Calvert, with short intervals of rest, nursed Mrs. Purdy for several days and nights. At one time the sick woman seemed to be better; then she seemed to be worse. One evening Mrs. Purdy suddenly cried out,

"O that I had a drink of cold water! I am suffering, suffering, suffering!" The poor woman had taken many warm drinks; but they had done no good,—at any rate, had not allayed her thirst. Flora pitied the sufferer, and said, resolutely,

"I will give you a drink of cold water."

"O no," said the woman, "the doctor forbids it; I suppose it would kill me."

"I am not sure of that," Flora remarked. "The Hemsteads, you remember, had the fever. Without any permission from the doctor, I opened the windows and

aired the house. I did more : in direct violation of the doctor's order, I gave Sammy a drink of cold water, when he cried for it, and I could bear his cries no longer. Sammy has always declared that the drink saved his life, — that, without it, he would have died as his brother did. When calomel is taken in large quantities, then, for aught I know, cold water may be dangerous. But I think you are not taking calomel, Mrs. Purdy."

"Give me a drink, Flora," said the suffering woman. "I am going to die at any rate; I need not suffer so much."

"I will give you a drink," said the nurse. "But you must not talk in that way. Don't you wish to live and see your children?"

"O my babies ! might I see my babies again !" was the woman's sorrowful cry.

Flora Calvert, anticipating a great reform in medical practice, administered cold water to the suffering woman. The cold water may not have cured her ; besides allaying her thirst, it may not have conferred any special benefit ; but it is certain that the water did not kill her, or do any special harm. Mrs. Purdy began to grow better. The nurse could see improvement every day.

Happily, in late years, when a regard for the laws and powers of nature, and not tradition, prejudice, or ignorance, rules the medical profession, fever patients, small-pox patients, and patients of all kinds, are permitted to enjoy both air and water. Perhaps, in our times, there are physicians who go to another extreme, being satisfied with nothing and devoted to empyricism.

Purdy returned home unexpectedly. Charles Calvert, without Mrs. Purdy's knowledge, had written, informing him of his wife's illness, and urging his immediate return. Purdy entered the house abruptly. Flora was present, and saw the meeting of the husband and wife. Mrs.

Purdy tried to smile. If there be such things as "mournful smiles," her smile must have been one of that kind. Purdy also tried to smile. But his smile was maudlin, — the smile of a man stupefied and debased by drink, — the smile of one who had lost all manhood, virtue and sensibility.

Purdy brought home no money. As was learned afterwards, the tavern-keeper at Evansburgh had taken his last shilling, when he was nearly in sight of home. Such was, and is, the state of society, that men are virtually authorized, by law, to promote vice, crime and suffering; to pauperize families without number; to impose enormous burdens on the community, — in order that they — the gentlemen of the licensed hotels and saloons — may get money. So Purdy got a dram, the tavern-keeper got a shilling, and the sick woman at home got nothing. Purdy's arrival simply added to the burdens of the people.

Mrs. Purdy recovered. No other case of small-pox occurred in the neighborhood at that time. The people were delivered from great apprehensions and fears.

When Mrs. Purdy had sufficiently recovered, and the house had been disinfected as far as possible, Mrs. Calvert proposed to return the children. Flora led them home. The little ones went with bounding hearts and skipping feet. But their kind friend and conductor felt constrained to say something.

"Children," said Flora, "your mother, you know, has been sick. She does not look just as she did. Her face is not just what it was, but it will look better after a while. When you see her, don't show any fear; don't look at her face at all."

Flora and the little ones entered the house.

The children, in despite of the forewarning, were surprised, and, for a moment, shrunk away from the

woman who met them. But they heard a familiar voice ; they saw something like the old smile ; they recognized their dear mother ; and they rushed into her arms. Flora witnessed the joyful meeting between the mother and her "babies ;" and she felt that the pleasure which this spectacle afforded her was a great reward for her toils and vigils. Yet, having taken another look at the poverty and wretchedness of the place, and having reflected, for a moment, on the dark prospect before the family, she went away with a feeling of great sadness.

When Flora reached home, Charley met her at the door. He was extremely happy.

"It is all over now," Charley exclaimed, "and you are safe. I have thought so often about Aunt Molly lately. She would be a beautiful woman if it were not for the small-pox. I am inexpressibly glad, Flora, that your pretty face has received no damage."

Flora smiled, and replied with some appearance of gayety.

"Yes, Charley, it is all over now ; and while my face is no worse, my heart, I believe, is better."

Mrs. Calvert stood behind Charley, and certainly looked at Flora with pride and pleasure. At the same time, she thanked the Supreme Father for the preservation of her child.

CHAPTER XXII.

EXPERIENCES.

FLORA CALVERT did not, even during the sickly years, spend all her time in hard work and in visiting and nursing sick people. She had her recreations. Friendly visits gave her many pleasant hours. Now and then,

especially in the summer time, little nephews and nieces came in crowds, and gave her special employment and pleasure. These little folks liked their grandmother, for she was very kind. They liked Charley too, for he was very funny. But they liked Flora best. Why? When she had time, Flora rambled about with the children, gathering flowers in the meadow, or spring-berries and mountain-tea in the woods. Sooner or later, she found a log, a mossy stone, or a grassy bank, sat down, gathered the little ones around her, and told them a story. The children liked the ramble, but they liked the story more. Beyond all question, they preferred their aunt's story to their uncle's nonsense, and even to their grandmother's maple sugar. Flora's kindness and stories won their little hearts. They could not help but love her who gave them so much delight. Why has the race of story-tellers passed away? True, men and women are writing stories for children; but a story heard, when the eyes, face, hands and sympathies, besides the tongue, are speaking, is ten times better than a story read in a book. Why, Flora Calvert often shed tears while telling one of her own stories, and the little hearers invariably wept with her. Then, when a story ended happily, and her face, voice and gesture, gave expression to her pleasurable emotions, the little folks clapped their hands and raised a joyous shout.

Sugar-making was an important business in the country. It usually commenced about the first of March, and continued through the month. Young people enjoyed the sugar-making season. It varied their labors. It gave them a pleasant excitement. It allowed them to live awhile in the woods, and the woods were always attractive, especially to boys. But sugar-making was profitable. People, not only supplied themselves, but supplied the towns, with sugar and molasses. Young people often

purchased their Sunday clothes, even their wedding suits, by the sale of these commodities.

The "sugar-camp" was commonly in the woods, and sometimes was remote from any dwelling. It was rather picturesque and interesting. Five or six iron kettles were suspended in a row. A huge log, called the "back-log," lay at one side; a smaller log, called the "fore-stick," lay at the other; the space between the logs was a sort of furnace, receiving the fuel and supplying the necessary heat. A cabin or shed, open in front, stood near the fire. It was constructed of small logs and covered with clapboards. It always contained a bench, and it sometimes contained a couch, on which a person could take a nap. As the chinks in the walls were filled with moss, and a great fire blazed in front, the hut was commonly warm and comfortable, even in the coldest weather. Vessels in the shape of barrels and hogsheads, or in the shape of long troughs, lay or stood around, holding what some called "sugar-water" and others called "sap." Small troughs, formed of pine, cucumber, and other suitable timber, lay at the trees, receiving the sweet liquid as it fell.

Sugar-making was a laborious business. In bad weather it was decidedly unpleasant. The labors of the camp were often divided, or distributed among the members of a family. The father or grown sons made and placed the troughs, tapped the trees, set the kettles, and built the cabin. Boys provided fuel, and gathered the water, hauling or carrying it to the camp. Girls attended the camp, filled the kettles, added fuel when necessary, and stirred the molasses passing into sugar. Sometimes, however, men and boys did all the work; and sometimes girls and married women gathered the water as well as superintended the boiling.

The young people of the country, as has been observed,

were much inclined to associate pleasure with work. Sugar-making had some pleasant accompaniments. Young people often visited neighboring camps. When two or three parties, by accident or design, met at a camp, ate fresh sugar or sipped fresh syrup, and engaged in a general frolic, there were lively times and much real amusement.

Charles Calvert and his sister made sugar every season. Sometimes they had help, and sometimes they had none. During one season they were aided by a young boy. When business was pressing, Flora and the boy attended the camp during the first part of the night, and Charles attended it alone during the latter part.

Flora Calvert was commonly regarded as a heroine. Her high character as a brave girl was acquired when contagious and deadly diseases prevailed in the community. Her courage was now tested in a new way.

One night Charles reached the camp at an early hour. He said that Flora might go home; but as a great part of the night was before him, and he wished for a little companionship as well as a little help, he suggested that the boy should remain. Flora assented cheerfully to the proposed arrangement, and started alone, leaving Charles preparing fuel. A forest, about half a mile in extent, intervened between the camp and the open fields. There was some moonlight, and Flora could easily follow the path. The forest was gloomy; but the girl had no fears. If she had been timid, she might have been often startled by dark shadows, even by gleams of moonshine, by the creaking of intertwined limbs, and by the whistling of the wind as it swept among the branches of the lofty pine. If she had been timid, she might have fancied that she saw specters or savages, wolves or panthers, and heard sobs and moans, shrieks and terrible cries. If she had been timid and suspicious, she might have begun to

think that a bad character had been prowling about the camp, and was still watching her movements. Indeed, if Flora had been suspicious, and had listened sharply, she would actually have heard a pretty regular tramp and the frequent breaking of a limb, on a line parallel with her path, and distant only a few rods. But, as the girl walked on, perfectly free from both timidity and suspicion, she saw nothing, heard nothing, feared nothing.

Flora had reached the middle of the wood, and was proceeding with slow steps and with perfect unconcern. Suddenly, she heard a terrible shriek or scream. It seemed to come from a point near the road and rather in advance of her position. Of course, in despite of bravery, she was very much startled. She stopped and listened. "What is it?" Flora asked herself. "Is it a panther or wild-cat, or only an owl? I wonder if Charley hears." Charley was splitting wood at the moment, and heard nothing. Presently there was another shriek. It was quite different from the first. "That is not the scream of a panther, or the howl of a wolf, or the cry of a night-bird," Flora said to herself. "It is the yell of a man." A low, continuous growl was heard for a minute or two. Then there was a third shriek. It differed from the first, and it differed from the second. "I know what it is," Flora said, using real words, but speaking in very low tones. "It is Ike Kloster. He wants to scare me; he is seeking revenge; or he is hired by some wicked fellows to come here and try my courage. Well, I am not much afraid of Ike."

Ike Kloster was a low character. Some people thought that he was partly idiotic. Others believed that he was brutal rather than simple. All respectable people avoided him as much as possible. Ike was the only man who had ever given Flora Calvert any serious annoyance. Urged, as she believed, by others, he had followed her steps for a

long time, although she had repelled him with loathing — sometimes with fierce anger and fiery words.

Flora deliberated whether she should advance or return to the camp. At last, reflecting that an attempt to return would show fear, and, possibly, bring danger, and knowing that the distance to the fields was about the same as the distance to the camp, she determined to proceed. She walked forward twenty or thirty yards, and then heard something like a growl or bark. It was very near the path. She stopped, peered into the darkness, but at first discerned no living creature. Continuing to look and listen sharply, she began to hear a rustling among the leaves and a noise like the purring of a cat. Presently she distinguished the outlines, not of a man, but of a large four-footed animal. Flora almost ceased to live. But she was soon able to think; and she asked herself, "Is it really a wild beast — panther or wolf? or is it Ike Kloster on his hands and knees, imitating a wild beast and trying to scare me?"

Flora started again, and walked fast. Still inclined to think that her enemy was Ike Kloster, she resolved not to run, lest she might give him the triumph which he sought, and encourage him to persist in his malignant efforts: at the same time, she felt that, to be prepared for a battle with her enemy — man or beast — she must reserve her strength, and not exhaust it by efforts that might be worse than fruitless. Having walked forty or fifty yards, she paused and listened. She heard distinctly a heavy, rapid tramp, and a crashing among the dead branches of fallen timber, the tramp and noise advancing in the direction in which she was going, and on a line only two or three rods from her path. Flora's heart seemed to make a bound, and then to stop altogether. She was convinced in a moment that her enemy — man or beast — was rushing forward to intercept her flight. She now felt that she must run — run for her life. She started and ran at her

utmost speed. She had the advantage of a straight, smooth road, while the enemy might have been floundering among logs and brush. Having run several hundred yards, she stopped to listen and to recover breath. She heard a noise behind her: turning a little, she observed that something entered the road. Flora stood in deep shadow, and could not have been readily seen by human eyes. Her enemy happened to stop where the moonshine reached the ground; and she distinctly saw the figure of a man. She was now certain that her enemy was Ike Kloster. He stood perfectly still, and looked back, no doubt watching for the girl whom he intended to frighten or capture.

But the sharp-sighted girl saw his mistake, and took advantage of it instantly. She walked away softly, kept in the shadows as much as possible, and glanced back almost every moment. As she advanced, her step became faster and faster. She still glanced around, but saw no enemy. She soon entered a field, looked back, saw no pursuer, then ran at her highest speed, reached home, and had the sweet consciousness that she was safe. Yet she could hardly restrain herself from rushing into her mother's chamber and throwing herself into her mother's arms.

Flora Calvert said nothing about her terrible experience. She did not give a hint of it even to her mother. But at a later time, when Flora believed that her days were about to close on earth, she revealed to her brother some of the secrets of her life, and, among others, her frightful adventure in the dark woods.

As time progressed, Flora Calvert began to lose the special companionship of early and dear friends. Marriage entered the social circle and made important changes. Jane Folsom was a year or two younger than Flora Calvert, and had a lighter and gayer disposition. Yet Jane and Flora had a strong mutual attachment; they

were often together ; and they greatly enjoyed each other's society. Jane was frank and honest as well as lively, and was generally liked by the people.

A Mr. Durham, journeying towards the West, happened to stop at Konneautt Lake. He saw Miss Jane Folsom and was charmed by the lively girl. He concluded to stay awhile in the neighborhood. Before many months had elapsed, Mr. Durham came to Jane, at an early hour of the day, and solemnly declared that he could not live without her. Explaining the matter a little, he said that, unless she would consent to be his wife, he would — not kill himself or die broken-hearted, but — resume his journey towards the West. Jane believed Mr. Durham's story, pitied him, and agreed to save his life, or prevent his departure, — that is, to marry him. Mr. Durham and Miss Folsom were married ; and they soon occupied a house of their own. Jane was a young wife ; but it may be presumed that she was a happy one.

In a new country, people marry early in life, and usually have many children ; in an old country, people marry, if they marry at all, comparatively late, and commonly have small families. In a new country, young people may sometimes marry thoughtlessly and rashly ; in an old country, people, grown rich and luxurious, fond of ease and devoted to pleasure, foolishly and wickedly depreciate what God has declared to be the greatest earthly blessings — wedded love, the "fruitful vine," and "olive plants around the table."

Jane, it may be conceded, did not think much about the future ; she did not think at all about a "settlement," an equipage, silk dresses and jewelry, or a good position in society. If she thought about motherhood and a large family, she felt no terrors. Trusting in her Maker, as well as in Mr. Durham and herself, she fearlessly assumed her new position in life.

Flora had always regarded Charles as her best friend, of course excepting her mother. Charles and Flora were the youngest members of the Calvert family. They had been left, in their childhood, by brothers and sisters who married and went away. They grew up together, loved each other most tenderly, were companions almost constantly, and hardly ever dreamed of a separation. Yet Flora was left, or seemed to be left, by her dear brother. The time came when Charles Calvert carried home the fair-haired girl whom he had first seen at Mr. Dilworth's, and to whom he had been introduced by Tom McConnell's bride. Leaving the old homestead, he built a house for himself, and made improvements in accordance with his own judgment and taste.

Flora still met Jane now and then, and she saw Charles frequently; but a change had come, — in fact, a real separation had occurred, and the poor girl, in despite of her piety, good sense and busy life, felt lonely and sad.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO MEN — ALIKE AND NOT ALIKE.

Two men, Henry Stafford and John Branley, met at Konneautt Lake. These two men were alike in some respects and different in others.

They were not much alike in personal appearance. Both were tall; but while Stafford was large and muscular, Branley was comparatively slender and delicate. Both had active dispositions. Both had much intelligence. Both had literary tastes. Both were ambitious; but their ambition did not lead them in the pursuit of the same objects. Stafford aspired to be a great business man, and

he contemplated a removal to a sea-board city, and the establishment of a great commercial house. He aimed at civil honors, and fancied that a seat in the State Legislature, and even a seat in Congress, could be attained in a few years. He also aspired to a place among people distinguished for wealth, culture and refinement. Branley aspired to scholarship, but beyond that, or apart from that, had scarcely any definite object.

Literary tastes brought these men together and made them intimate. During two winters they often met, and discussed scientific and literary questions. Branley had a high opinion of Stafford, and, while discovering some imperfections, believed that his intelligence, probity and noble spirit, entitled him to the first place as a leader in society.

Mr. Branley led a very busy life after he left Konneautt Lake. He did not forget Flora Calvert, but he tried to forget her. He tried to exclude her from his thoughts by continuous, absorbing occupation. He attended the academy during a few months. He taught school another term. He performed a large amount of agricultural labor.

During a certain period, he earnestly considered one subject — the choice of a profession or business. His mind was attracted in different ways. His literary tastes suggested and magnified a professorship. His ambition suggested the law, and invested it with a sort of halo. The schemes and glowing words of Stafford gave a splendor to commerce. And his love of freedom and the country did not permit him to overlook the claims of agriculture. He reached a conclusion at last; and, having made a choice, his mind wavered no more.

Mr. Branley did not decide in favor of a professorship. The idea of spending his life as a teacher of common schools was not pleasant; and the idea of preparing him-

self, by a long course of hard study, for a professorship in a respectable institution, was formidable, — indeed, considered in connection with his age and means, appeared quite preposterous. He believed that his education would serve for all common business, and even for some of the professions; and he resolved that it should suffice.

Mr. Branley did not study law. At one time the legal profession attracted him powerfully. To stand in a court of justice, defending innocence, or pleading for right, seemed to be a noble and worthy business. To stand in the forum, like an orator of antiquity, declaiming against oppression and robbery, and extolling patriotism and virtue, seemed to be the grandest position, and to confer the highest honor, attainable by a citizen. The Judge who visited Branley's school at Konneautt Lake actually called the youth into his office and advised him to study law, presenting strong inducements. Yet when he had a fair look at realities, — when he entered the court-house a number of times, heard the lawyers wrangling, observed their attempts to browbeat and confuse witnesses, to mislead juries, and defeat justice, and learned that all was done for pay, — when, in addition, he noticed their perpetual contact with human nature in its most repulsive forms, he turned away from courts and lawyers in disgust, and felt that it was morally impossible for him to enter the legal profession. Refusing to be a lawyer, Mr. Branley had no chance of ever becoming a President Judge, and had little chance of ever attaining a seat in Congress.

Nor did he go to the city and engage in commerce or some other great business, in order to amass a fortune and become a great man. The glory that encircles the "merchant prince," the "great banker," the "millionnaire," attracting thousands of youth from the country, did not, in the smallest degree, dazzle his eyes and mislead his judgment.

Mr. John Branley chose agriculture as the business of his life. He resolved that his home and his work should be in the country. He liked the freedom and independence of rural life, — that is, freedom from the trammels of fashion and folly, and independence of the “wear and tear” that accompany trade, and the hazards and anxieties that accompany speculation. Besides, Mr. Branley loved Nature and rejoiced in her favors. Since he lost Flora Calvert, Nature was his sweetheart and companion. Trees, plants, flowers, birds, crystal fountains and murmuring rills, were the things which he loved. The vestment which he now admired was not the neat attire of a country maiden, with its few simple ornaments, — still less the silk of the grand lady, with its accompaniment of laces and jewels; but the green robe of spring and summer, the golden robe of autumn, and the white robe of winter, just as it dropped from the clouds. He reveled in pure air, in sunshine and shade, and subsisted on milk and honey. And, besides all this, the young man was convinced that the chance for substantial and permanent success in business, for health and long life, for real and abiding happiness, was far better in the country than in the city. He had deeply sympathized with his father and mother in their life of toil; but he believed that now, when the country had become so much improved and so many advantages were enjoyed, he could live in comparative ease and comfort. At the same time, he believed that the country afforded a wide field and every opportunity for serving God and promoting the interests of humanity.

Branley bought property a few miles distant from his native place, cultivated a farm as his principal business, and seemed to have a full share of prosperity. He had a house and a barn; he had horses, and cattle, and sheep; and he had the promise of a good harvest. But Mr. John

Branley had no wife. However, he had no thought of passing his days in solitude, much less of committing suicide, on account of his disappointment in love. He was actually looking and searching for a companion. Alas ! he found no woman who could take the place of Flora Calvert and satisfy his judgment and his heart.

Mr. Henry Stafford was also a busy man. He established factories and stores at different places. He watched the political field. He pursued his objects with untiring energy. Yet he failed seriously, — failed in business, failed in political matters, failed in almost everything. How a man, with such talents and energy, failed so greatly and so continuously, was a mystery to many people. It may be presumed that Stafford was visionary and rash, or deficient in judgment, — that he engaged in too many enterprises, and changed his business too frequently.

One day, a strange report reached Evansburgh. "Henry Stafford has married Maria Bostwick," was the report which passed from house to house, and speedily circulated through the whole community. Every person was surprised. Stafford's relatives were indignant. The Bostwicks were well known. They were very proud and very poor, and for reasons, good or bad, were extremely unpopular. They lived in an isolated way. Their pride kept them from associating with common people ; and their poverty excluded them from the society of the rich and fashionable.

One of the family, by a long course of sharp operations in business, acquired wealth ; and, dying without any direct heirs, bequeathed his money to his brothers and sisters. Maria, of course, received a share.

Maria was elderly, and had no attraction in face, person or manners. She was haughty, selfish, acrimonious in temper, and, as people generally thought, wholly unfitted for married life.

How did it happen that Henry Stafford, the handsome,

talented, popular young man, married Maria Bostwick, a woman so faded and disagreeable, so thoroughly disliked in the community, and so unfitted to be his wife and companion? This question was invariably answered in one way: "He married her for her money." It may be presumed that Henry Stafford, having a magnificent project on hands, and needing money to carry it forward, or, which is more probable, being already involved in debt, and needing money to prevent bankruptcy and ruin, and hearing that Maria Bostwick had secured a large share of her brother's cash, notes, and bonds, went, in a fit of excitement or desperation, and proposed marriage to this woman.

But why did Maria accept the proposal? That question puzzled the people. One lady said that when Stafford was no more than a big boy, Maria regarded him with tenderness, and may have loved him still. That theory was not confirmed by her subsequent conduct. It may be conjectured that the idea of marrying a handsome, aspiring, popular man was agreeable, and had some influence. It may also be conjectured that Maria wished to get an obedient servant. Some things pertaining to her conduct may be stated with certainty: she gave no affection; and she promised no money.

The result of the incongruous marriage and stupendous folly was just what every one expected. Stafford got no money. Maria got no servant. Nor did she get anything that pleased her. Strife began immediately. Bickering followed bickering; quarrel succeeded to quarrel. Stafford and the woman he married scarcely pretended to live together. Two or three slight attempts to keep house, and live as man and wife, brought contention and bitterness, and resulted in speedy separation. Meanwhile Henry Stafford impaired his standing as an honorable man, and lost much of the sympathy which had been given freely when he was unfortunate in business.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SICK LADY.

ANOTHER matter began to agitate the community. Flora Calvert was taken ill. A report of her illness spread rapidly, and people called to see her. The nature of her disease could not be ascertained. Some persons expressed the opinion that Flora had a rapid consumption. They thought that they could see the "hectic flush" and hear the ominous "hacking cough." Others believed that she had a kind of low fever. A few suspected that she might be heart-broken. Many thought she had brought on her illness by excessive labors among the sick and suffering.

Contrary to Flora's wish, — in fact, disregarding her earnest remonstrance, some of her anxious friends called Dr. Marsden. The doctor professed to understand the case perfectly; but he probably knew nothing about it, or no more than others. He laid some medicine on the table, gave some directions, promised to return in a few days, and departed.

Charles Calvert visited Flora almost every day. He still loved his sister. He could not forget or neglect the dear companion of his childhood. He often sat at the side of her bed, held her hand, looked into her face, and talked on pleasant subjects. He wished to cheer her, and do all in his power to promote her recovery. But Charles was anxious to ascertain the nature of his sister's disease.

"Flora," he remarked, on one occasion, "both Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Patton say that you have overworked yourself, visiting and nursing the sick. Did you not last week make sugar in the daytime and wait on the Temples

every night? Perhaps fatigue and the want of sleep have caused all this trouble."

"I do not know whether I have injured myself or not," Flora replied. "But, Charley," she continued, "I do not expect to live long, and I want to do all the good I can while I am here. You remember that four years ago I gave myself to the Saviour. I promised to obey Him, and He says, 'Occupy till I come.' I promised to follow His example, and He went about doing good. I must work while it is day, for the night comes when no one can work."

"You are a real Christian; you are a true heroine," Charles said, fervently. "But, Flora, a Christian woman should take care of her health in order that she may do good and be happy. Why may you not see a good old age? Why may you not do more in a long life than in a short one?"

"As the Lord pleases," said Flora, calmly, "I wish to work or rest, to live or die."

However, Charles began to suspect that Flora's illness was mental rather than physical. He determined to ascertain the truth. Supposing that a plain question would accomplish nothing, he resolved to effect his object by a somewhat indirect and gradual process.

"Flora," said Charles one day, "I have often wondered that you did not marry. I think you are very pretty and also right sensible, and I believe every body has the same opinion. Many good, moral, respectable young men have lived about here. I think that all admired and liked you, and I am sure that several—for instance, Tom McConnell and John Branley—loved you most tenderly. Why did you not accept one of your lovers, or encourage one of your admirers, and make him happy,—at the same time, satisfy your womanly nature and brighten your future?"

Charles listened for an answer. Flora, however, was quiet for a little time. She seemed to be thinking. At length, speaking in a slow, solemn manner, she said,

"I could have married any one of my acquaintances — except one; and, O Charley! he was the one I wanted!"

Flora covered her face, but she could not suppress a sob. Charles was deeply moved, though he was not altogether taken by surprise. He reflected a moment, and then said, tenderly,

"Flora, I have suspected for a day or two that your illness is heartache. You have confirmed my suspicion. But until recently I never knew or suspected that you loved any body. I cannot imagine who the *one* is — the one you wanted but could not get. That is the mystery now. Sister, who is the *one*?"

With her face still covered and sobs escaping her, Flora was just able to articulate,

"Henry Stafford!"

Charles was now thoroughly surprised as well as moved.

"I am astonished beyond measure," he exclaimed. "I never had a suspicion that you regarded that man with any special favor. If you had named Lambrun, I should not have been so much surprised."

Flora made a great effort to be calm, and said,

"George Lambrun was not so bad a fellow as some people thought. He was open, resolute, dashing. Whatever he wished to do he tried to do at once and to do fully. But I cared nothing for Lambrun. My heart was lost a long time before I saw him. Charley, you now see why Mr. Branley could not be loved. And you see a reason, in addition to those you knew before, why Tom McConnell had no chance. Yes, Charley," the sick girl continued, with rising emotions, "six years ago, when I was fifteen years old, Henry Stafford got my heart; and he has kept it ever since. But, O Charley, my heart is crushed and bleeding now!"

"Dear sister, I can weep with you. But how have you been able to hide your secret through all these years?"

"Of course I tried hard to keep the secret in my own breast. I made a constant and anxious effort to conceal it from you, from mother, and from every human being. Whether I succeeded fully in concealing it from Stafford is a question I cannot answer."

"Flora, will you tell me how Stafford gained your affections?"

"You can remember that when I was a very young girl, he and I were often together. He sometimes came to our house, sat, talked and laughed, told stories, and sung many songs, most of them about love and marriage. Then we frequently met at church and at singing-schools. I thought he was very handsome and very smart. I thought he was a charming talker and singer. Everybody liked him, and that assured me that he was a man of superior qualities and merit. Besides all this, he seemed to like me; he certainly showed me much attention. Was it not natural that I should begin to care for him?"

"It was natural, almost inevitable," said Charles. "I knew that Stafford was always very respectful and attentive to you; and I now wonder that I did not think more about probable results. I believe that Mr. Branley, at one time, watched Stafford closely, and felt more or less jealousy. But, Flora, I want to learn something more. Did Stafford try to get your affections? And has he tried to keep them?"

Flora was now willing to talk about her secret, which, indeed, was a secret no longer. She proceeded to answer her brother's questions.

"I do not know, certainly, that Stafford ever purposely made an effort to win my heart, or that he ever purposely made an effort to keep it. On the other hand, I do not know that he ever made an effort to show me

that his attentions were common civility and nothing more. Something I do know : his attentions, whether he designed it or not, won my regard at first, and his attentions, offered as he had opportunity, kept my regard till the day of his marriage.

"Let me tell you, Charley, what happened in the fall preceding Mr. Branley's last school. You and I went to town — don't you remember? — we met Henry Stafford, and he said, 'Flora, I have got a new skiff and a new flute. Come and see the skiff, take a sail, and I will supply the music.' I turned to you and said, 'Charley, what will I do?' And you replied, 'Go and try the new skiff. I will do some business in the store, call at the post-office, and meet you at the landing.' I went, saw the new skiff, entered, and sat down. Stafford took the oars, rowed the skiff out into the lake two or three hundred yards from the shore, then let it float hither and thither as the light breeze happened to move it. Stafford, laying down the oars, took up his flute and played several beautiful airs. The town's people heard the music, and a dozen or more came to the bank and listened. Then Henry laid down his flute and began to talk. He was unusually sober; he seemed to be embarrassed — I never saw him embarrassed before. I began to think he was about to say something of a very important nature, — something that would be deeply interesting to myself. I began to tremble — O if he saw it! Having said a word or two about the skiff and the flute, he began to talk about himself; and he used these very words, which I have treasured up in my memory : 'Flora, I am a citizen of the world; I am homeless, friendless, solitary, unhappy. My way of life is not good — is it, Flora? It might be greatly improved — don't you think so? Well, next summer I will make a change; I will settle down; I will have a new kind of life, and I hope it will be better

and happier than the old one.' I said nothing. I listened, and trembled violently. I was now sure that Henry was going to make a declaration and a request of the highest importance to both of us. But he ceased talking, took up the oars, moved the skiff back and forward for a minute or two, laid down the oars, took up the flute, played a few airs, ceased playing, and held the flute in one hand. He said nothing more, and my heart sunk within me. At last I was compelled to say, 'Henry, the sun is down, and Charley is waiting for me; I must go.' We went ashore, and walked up on the bank; you stood there as I expected; but one stood there whom I had not expected at all—Mr. John Branley. I thought Mr. Branley looked hurt or offended, but I am sure I felt kindly towards him. Then you and I went home. I never forgot Stafford's words; and those words never ceased to have an influence.

"Now, Charley, I must tell you what happened in the following spring. You remember that we were present at the close of the school. Well, Mr. Branley and I took a walk along the bank of the lake. We found a log, sat down, and looked at the water. We talked about the gulls and the swans; and then Mr. Branley began to talk about something else. O Charley, can I tell you all! Mr. Branley offered me his love and asked for mine in return. I could say nothing. I could not tell him my secret. I durst not explain why I could not return his love. I could not speak at all; I could do nothing but weep. At the same time, while thus solicited by one whom I so highly esteemed, and for whom my heart really bled, I was true and unwavering in my secret allegiance. I recalled the words, 'Next summer I will make a change,—I will have a new life;' and those words held me fast. So Mr. Branley and I parted—parted good friends; but there was great sorrow on both

sides. The summer came and passed; another summer followed; and still another; but the 'change' and the 'new life,' as these were pictured to me, never came.

"A report that Stafford was courting this or that girl reached me now and then. You may remember that when we were at Mount Hope, a few years ago, one of the party said that Stafford was paying attention to Betsy McLean. When Henry knew or suspected that such a report had come to my ears, he was sure, at the first opportunity, to speak of the report to me, and denounce it as the invention of gossips. But, in fact, whenever we met, and had opportunities for conversation — at a wedding, for instance — he always said or did something that was soothing or flattering, and that virtually promised great things in the future. When we met last, a few months ago, Stafford said, 'Flora, I have been working hard to gather some property, and be prepared to settle down in a new kind of life. But I have been unfortunate. Perhaps I shall be more successful hereafter, and be able to accomplish my wishes.' Success never came to Stafford, and the realization of my dreams never came to me, and now cannot come.

"Charley, what do you think of Henry's conduct? His words implied everything and formally promised nothing. Was his course right? Was it manly? Was it generous? O Charley! was it not —"

Flora did not finish the sentence. Perhaps she had been tempted to ask, "Was it not deceitful, cruel, wicked?" Charles offered an opinion.

"Implied promises are as binding as formal promises, and a violation of one kind is as criminal as a violation of the other. But I never supposed that Henry Stafford would intentionally deceive any one."

"O Charley, I do not say, and I will not say, that he purposely deceived me," Flora remarked, with much

earnestness. "But he somehow made me believe and expect everything."

"Flora," said Charles, "Henry Stafford liked you and wanted you; his misfortunes tempted him to marry Maria Bostwick."

"His misfortunes, then," said Flora, with uncontrollable emotion, "have brought great misery — misery to himself — misery to me!"

"My dear sister," Charles now remarked, earnestly, "say no more. The case is plain. I understand your illness perfectly. You have the heartache. I do not blame you for anything. Henry Stafford was a splendid man, and he gave you abundant reason to think that you were the object of his love and his hopes. It was natural and proper that you should have liked him. It is natural and proper that you should grieve now. I sympathize deeply with you, sister. Heartache is hard to bear. I have had it myself, and I know what it is. But heartache is curable. I have been cured completely. And, Flora, you can and must be cured. You must and shall return to the world again, and be an ornament and a blessing to society. You must and shall make some one happy. You must and shall be happy yourself."

After this burst of passionate eloquence, Charles rose up, pressed his sister's hand affectionately, and walked out of the house. He stood or walked in the front yard awhile, thinking, perhaps planning. He reëntered the house, spoke to his mother, and imparted the information which he had just received from Flora. She was less surprised than he had been, and remarked,

"I have suspected for a long time that Flora had a secret trouble, or, at least, a secret mental occupation. She was often silent, yet evidently thinking, or occupied with something apart from her work and apart from society. I did not think she was very unhappy; but I

fancied that her mind, rather against her will, was engrossed by something far away — far away in space or far away in time. And, Charley, I have had another fancy. Flora is really a good girl; she desires to honor God; she wishes to serve her fellow-beings. But I have fancied that she sought occupation among the poor, sick and distressed, partly to relieve her mind from annoying reflections. And all the time I suspected that either Stafford or Branley had a place in her thoughts and a connection with her trouble. So my suspicions are confirmed. When Flora was weakened by excessive watching and nursing, — when she was depressed in spirit by your marriage and departure from us, — when she had not received a single note of warning from Stafford or any one, the blow came, and she fell. She has, as you know, a most sensitive nature, and when she suffers she suffers terribly. But Flora has a strong mind, and will rise again.”

“Yes,” remarked Charles, “Flora is strong-minded and will rise; but we must aid her as far as possible; and I am just now thinking about something that may be done.”

Charles returned to Flora’s chamber. Peaceful as the lake when not a zephyr plays over its surface, serene as the blue sky, bright and sweet as a beam of the morning, appeared the sick girl’s face. Flora looked as if she had left the world, with its excitements and hopes, as well as its disappointments and troubles. She lay on her couch like one in a trance. Her eyes gazed upwards; her thoughts appeared to be placed on something beyond the stars — the things unseen and eternal. “If there can be a spiritual face, that is one,” Charles said to himself. He stood and looked at Flora with wonder and admiration. But he had a purpose and could not surrender it. He pronounced her name in a subdued, gentle voice. Flora

heard, turned her head, and looked at him. She was instantly back in the world. Charles actually saw tears and heard sobs again. He was convinced that he saw, not a spirit, but a woman, or a being with a human heart and a human sorrow.

"Dear sister," remarked Charles, "I wish to find some balm that will heal your wounded heart. That I may be enabled to see what will suit the case and to bring it forth, I propose to make some inquiries. Will you listen, Flora?"

"O yes, Charley," she said, "I will listen, and answer too, if I can."

"Have you forgotten Mr. Branley?" Charles asked.

"No, indeed," she replied. "I think about him often. I have thought about him to-day."

"Well, I am sure he has not forgotten you, Flora. I hear from him now and then, and know pretty well what he remembers. Sister, have you not a very high esteem for Mr. Branley?"

"Yes," Flora answered, promptly and emphatically. "He has a superior mind, noble principles, a good heart, a most generous nature."

"Do you not regard him as a very pleasant young man?"

"I do," she replied. "He was a very pleasant man three years ago, and I presume he is yet."

"Do you not believe, Flora, that, if your heart had been free, Mr. Branley would have won it by his fine qualities and his respectful, earnest, long-continued attentions?"

"I believe — I have no doubt of it — if my heart had not been pre-engaged when Mr. Branley offered me his love, he should have had my love in return. Perhaps I made a greivous mistake when I kept my thoughts fixed upon one who really offered me nothing, and refused to

think of another who offered me everything, and who was worthy of all that I could give. I have lost the love and companionship of a noble young man."

"Enough! enough!" cried Charles. "I have found the balm, and it shall be brought forth. You shall be cured, Flora."

Charles rose hastily, went into another room, sat down, and wrote a letter. It was addressed to John Branley. No letters had ever passed between Mr. Branley and Miss Calvert. But Mr. Branley and Charles Calvert had corresponded, and were pretty well acquainted with each other's affairs. It may be presumed that, through the brother's agency, Mr. Branley had occasionally learned something about Flora. Charles bid good-by to his mother and sister, went to Evansburgh, mailed his letter, and returned home.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SICK LADY CURED.

MR. JOHN BRANLEY received a letter, and, recognizing Charles Calvert's penmanship, opened it eagerly. He read as follows:

"EVANSBURGH, March 20th, 18—.

"MY DEAR JOHN:—

"Our Flora is sick, and we are in trouble. People are puzzled in regard to the nature of her disease. Some think she has the consumption. Others think she has a fever. Many believe she has simply been overtasked, doing her own work and waiting on sick folks. John, I have ascertained the nature of Flora's illness, and, at the same time, I have learned a great secret. Six years ago, Flora gave her heart to Henry Stafford. Though he made no formal declarations, she had good reason to think that he loved her. Indeed, I now feel very sure that he did love her at one time, if not

during all these years. Ambition or misfortune carried him away. Henry is now married, and Flora feels a wound.

"Now, dear John, our Flora has the heartache, and you are the man who can cure it. I am sure that you can render this good service. Flora has always had a very high esteem,—in fact, a very warm friendship for you. I am sure—indeed, she has said so—that if her heart had been free when she and you became acquainted, it would certainly have been given to you. Now, when she is bruized and suffering,—when she has heart-sickness, the worst of all, you should come forth; you should be the doctor. Flora's mind is strong, and she will rise above trouble. But sympathy will help any one. And your sympathy, dear John, will make her sound and well. Forgive her for not curing you when you had the heartache. She would have cured you if it had been in her power,—that is, if her heart had still been her own. Give her a chance now, and see what she can do. You must not think less of Flora because she has been attached to another. It is no discredit to her that she admired Henry Stafford. We all thought Stafford handsome, talented, and noble, and worthy of any woman's love. It is no discredit to Flora that she was so constant in her attachment. What is more valuable in a woman than fidelity?

"Let me whisper to you, John, that Flora is as pretty as ever, or will be when she is cured. She has now the fairness, bright eyes, and pretty smiles, and will have the roses and blushes, the rotund form and graceful step, the vivacity and joyousness—the very things you admire.

"My dear John, we must not let Flora die. Come and cure her, and make us all happy. Write soon.

"Yours affectionately,
"CHARLES CALVERT."

When Mr. Branley had read the last word, he rose from his chair, put on his hat, and walked to the door; then he hastily returned, sat down, and read the letter again. A flood of light was poured into his mind. The mystery which had been attached to Flora Calvert's life and conduct disappeared in a moment. The girl's tears, sobs, and speechless anguish, when he sat at her side on the banks of Konneautt Lake, offering his love and vainly pleading for hers, were perfectly understood.

Charles Calvert's letter contained strong pleading. It was not necessary. The revelation was enough. In an instant, sweet, beauteous Flora came back, and enthroned herself in his heart. He tasted the blessedness of re-

stored, hopeful love. He was drawn by an irresistible influence. He sprang up, went to the mirror, examined his face and person, stepped to the door and requested a hired man to feed his horse, then dressed himself, and made all needful preparations for a journey.

At three o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Branley mounted his horse and rode away. He moved forward rapidly. Sometimes there was a dash of rain or sleet; a cold wind met him all the time; but how little did he care! A delightful warmth pervaded his heart. A new world had opened before him, or he had become a new man. He had received a sort of inspiration, and not only understood the past, but could see the future clearly. Did Flora's illness give him great distress? No; for he knew that she would not die. Did the fact that Flora's illness was heartache seriously annoy him? No; for he knew that her heart was really sound, and that the ache would soon be gone. He had an assurance that he was going, not to see Flora die, but to cure her; not to weep with the dear one, but to rejoice with her; not to see tears and hear sobs, as had happened once, but to see smiles and every manifestation of a new life and joy; not to encounter defeat and misery, as had happened three years before, but to win ample success and blessing. Mr. John Branley was probably the happiest man in the world. His only trouble was the necessity of stopping in his journey and staying over night at a tavern.

A great surprise awaited Flora Calvert. Charles had not said a word about his letter, and his promises had been misunderstood, or were forgotten. The sick girl reclined on her bed, thinking, thinking, — thinking about her old associates, thinking now more frequently about John Branley than about Henry Stafford. But she probably had no more expectation of seeing one than of seeing the other.

Mr. Branley reached Mrs. Calvert's at nine o'clock in the morning, rode up to the front gate, dismounted in haste, walked rapidly to the door, surprised Mrs. Calvert by his sudden appearance, surprised her still more by refusing to sit down, and declaring that he wanted to see Flora. Mrs. Calvert left him standing and hurried into Flora's chamber. As she entered, Flora saw in her face an expression of both surprise and pleasure. The mother said, hastily,

"Flora, there is a visitor here, and he asks for you. Will you see him?"

"Who is he?" the sick girl inquired.

"Mr. Branley."

"Oh!" exclaimed Flora, clasping her hands together. The exclamation and the clasping might have indicated surprise; they certainly did not indicate affright or any kind of distress.

"Yes, mother," said Flora, much excited; "let him come in."

Mrs. Calvert walked to the door of the sitting-room and said, "Come this way, Mr. Branley, and you will see her." She conducted him to the door of Flora's chamber, and then turned back. The young man entered with a palpitating heart. His only fear, however, was that the beloved one might be sadly changed in face and person. He walked directly to the bed where Flora reclined in a wrapper.

"Flora!"

"Mr. Branley!"

They could say no more just then. What did Branley see? A delicate girl, with a most transparent complexion, glorious eyes, and a beaming countenance. What did Flora see? A man in the bloom and vigor of early manhood, with a face that expressed, not only intelligence and purity, but the tenderness, the sympathy,

the yearning, of a devoted heart. In an instant, as if effected by spiritual electricity, mutual understanding and confidence were established. What years of effort had failed to accomplish was accomplished in a moment without an effort, and almost without the utterance of a word. Branley took the sick girl's hand, and remarked,

"Flora, I learned that you were sick, and I have come to see you."

"I am glad that you have come," she responded.

"Flora, I wish to do something for you. Charley wrote and gave me some information. But, really, I am inspired; I know everything; and I feel that I can do everything. Flora, you have the heartache, and I have come to cure it."

"Mr. Branley!" the sick girl exclaimed, showing pleasure rather than surprise.

"Can I not succeed, Flora?" he inquired, still holding her hand.

"Perhaps you can," she replied, looking at him kindly and sweetly.

"Flora, no one stands between you and me now," remarked the agitated young man.

"No, one," she repeated, with much emotion.

"Flora, this hand is mine, and you are mine," said Branley. Then, pressing her hand, and looking earnestly into her face, he asked, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "Is it not so?"

"As you please, Mr. Branley," she answered, in soft, sweet tones.

He stooped down and kissed her. Never before had Branley used such liberty; but he now felt that such liberty was his rightful, conceded privilege. He sat down, and looked at Flora,—his own dear girl. He was silent for a minute or two. At length, the happy young man, still clasping the sick girl's hand, inquired

"My dear Flora, is not your heartache better already?"

"I think it is," she murmured, with a look that seemed to be partly a blush and partly a smile.

He kissed her again to perfect the cure. Both wept; but their tears were the tears of unspeakable joy.

There are many wounded hearts in the world. Happily, wounded hearts, as well as torn flesh and broken bones, may be healed. It is certainly possible for a man or a woman to love a second time, even when the first object of regard is among the living. If it were otherwise, the suffering in the world, though very great, would be much greater than it is. Sometimes disappointed love leads to the commission of suicide. Sometimes it leads to the deliberate choice or acceptance of celibacy. Commonly, however, the disappointed man or woman, not only seeks relief, but seeks it in a rational way. As a plant or vine, deprived of its support, throws out its tendrils to find a new one, so the desolated heart feels or searches for something to supply the place of what has been lost. Sometimes a poor girl or youth, disappointed in love, and becoming desperate and reckless, suddenly marries an unworthy person, and plunges into irremediable degradation and misery. Flora Calvert was in no danger of committing this great folly. She was endowed with excellent sense and judgment and great power of self-control, and, therefore, could not permit herself to act inconsiderately and rashly. Besides, it so happened that the man who offered to fill the vacuum in her heart, or heal its wound, was entirely worthy of her love and her hand.

Mr. Branley, having sat an hour or two with Flora, rose up, stepped into the parlor, spoke to Mrs. Calvert, walked out of the house, entered the garden, saw no roses and no rosy maiden, returned, entered Flora's chamber, and resumed the place which he had just left. He had

supreme contentment. He totally forgot the hour of grievous failure and disappointment, and the three years of loneliness and sorrow. His mind and heart were wholly occupied with present, actual happiness. As for Flora, she was in a state of pleasurable excitement. The long, unyielding attachment, the sympathy and devotion, of John Branley, powerfully affected her mind; and she now regarded him with fresh admiration and with the profoundest gratitude. Surely it was natural, and very proper, that esteem, friendship, admiration and gratitude, should change, and change rapidly, into the tenderest and sweetest of human passions. In fact, Flora began to think that she must have always loved, or, at least, very much liked, this chivalrous and enthusiastic young man.

Mr. Branley helped Flora to stand on her feet, then compelled her to take a walk. She leaned on his arm, and they walked slowly back and forward in the chamber.

"You see, Flora," Mr. Branley remarked, "it is good to have a support in the world. You could hardly walk without my aid."

"It is good, no doubt," she said, quietly; "provided the support is a good one. I have read something about a 'broken reed.'"

"Try me, Flora. Always lean on me."

"Perhaps you would grow weary."

"Never! never!"

Next day, Branley and Flora, while supremely happy, were comparatively calm and sober. They recollected the past, and conversed freely about it. They recalled many pleasant scenes and interviews. But they did not hesitate to speak of times and events that were associated with suffering and sorrow. They were able to speak calmly of a meeting on the bank of Konneautt Lake, in the evening of a certain October day, when each of them, unknown to the other, had an experience of disappoint-

ment and anguish. They were able even to recall, without a tear, and with but little agitation, an intensely sorrowful parting in the following spring, when, after a most painful interview, they bid adieu to each other, expecting to meet no more. Of course, they talked about the future, now becoming bright and rosy. The young man actually introduced the subject of marriage, and argued that there was no cause for delay.

"We have been acquainted four or five years," he said. "We are old enough. I am twenty-five, and you are twenty-one. We are, perhaps, nearly as wise as we shall ever be; at any rate, we may venture upon the sea of matrimony. Your mother, I think, should offer no objections now."

The fact that he was talking to a sick girl did not occur to his mind. Flora listened calmly and kindly. She was neither surprised or alarmed. Still, a little thought, obtruding itself now and then, gave her some trouble. It was not about her illness — she, too, had forgotten that — but something else. At length, her troublesome thought found expression in words.

"Are you sure, Mr. Branley, that you will never feel a pang, and that your love will not be weakened, when you remember that I had first, and for so many years, given my thoughts to another?"

"I am sure, I am sure, dear Flora, it will be as we wish," Branley replied, speaking most earnestly. "Your admiration for Stafford proved the excellency of your judgment and taste. Then I know that you did not give your love without solicitation on his part. He certainly loved you; but ambition or misfortune, as Charley says, carried him away. And your constancy, Flora, proves that you possess a quality of the very highest order and value. Your honor is as spotless as the fresh snow. Your heart is healed; it is perfectly whole and sound;

and it is mine. I feel no pangs, and I never shall feel any. My love cannot be weakened by reflections on your past life. Dear Flora, you need have no fear."

"You are very generous, Mr Branley," said Flora. Her little troublesome thought was gone, never to return.

"Providence has been leading us," Mr. Branley now remarked. "Providence led me to Evansburgh — led me along the bank of the lake, where I saw a sweet maiden whom I never forgot, — the one before my eyes. Providence led me to the old meeting-house, where I heard a sermon which I never forgot, and which persuaded me to seek the 'living water.' During several years I have been somewhat lonely; but I have been brought near to Nature, and, as I trust, to God and to Heaven. And through these lonely years my heart has been kept from new attachments — kept for you, my sweet girl. Now I am here, securing the greatest treasure on earth, realizing a blessing far beyond my hopes. Has not Providence been leading you, dear Flora?"

"Yes," she answered, speaking in a solemn and earnest manner. "Providence led me to the old meeting-house. I heard the sermon which you heard, and, like you, I was persuaded to seek the 'living water.' Providence has given me health, and a sphere of activity. I have been useful, I think, among the poor, the sick and the sorrowful. Meanwhile I have had much happiness. It is true that I have suffered a little; but the suffering has been useful. When I looked to the world for good, and found emptiness, or experienced that all was 'vanity and vexation of spirit,' I learned the more highly to appreciate, and the more earnestly to pursue, the things which are 'eternal in the heavens.'"

"Providence will guide us in the future," said the young man, speaking thoughtfully and earnestly. "We cannot, of course, escape all the ills of humanity; we must have

our share of burdens and sorrows; but the God of our fathers and mothers will guide, sustain and comfort us. Let us trust in Him, and be happy."

"I am trying to moderate my expectations," the young woman remarked. "There have been disappointments and troubles in the past; there will be the same in the future. Meanwhile I confide in the care of the great, good Father."

"This morning," said Mr. Branley, "I felt a momentary regret that three years of our youth had been lonely, and almost sad, when they might have been so different. A little reflection, however, assured me that those lonely years have brought gain and not loss. They have given us right views of life. They have chastened and improved us. They have strengthened our hearts and prepared us for duty. I believe these years of separation and loneliness have given us some special fitness for married life. We shall have a care for each other; we shall have an appreciation of each other's society; we shall have an intensity of happiness — such as would be impossible without our previous experience. Why, Flora, I fancy that the lost happiness of the three years, if not more than that, has gathered and flowed into the last thirty hours."

Branley paused, and listened for a remark. Flora was silent. Tears, however, gave some expression to thoughts which could not be expressed in words. The young man surprised her by suddenly introducing a new subject.

"Flora, would you believe that now, in the midst of my great happiness, I often think of Stafford, and pity him? I am exceedingly glad that he did not get my dear girl, — such, I confess, is my selfishness, — but I am very sorry that he has so many misfortunes and troubles. His business life appears to be a failure, and his married life appears to be a thousand times worse."

"I pity him with all my heart," said Flora; "and I ask my God to support and comfort him."

"That is right," Branley remarked. Then, abruptly changing the subject again, he asked, "Flora, what have you to say about the wedding?"

"How, and when, as you please, dear John," she answered, in her sweetest manner.

"You are right again," Branley cried, with exuberant delight. "You defer entirely to my wishes, and you say, *dear John* — the first time; say that again; say it often."

"Oh, you know, Mr. Branley," said Flora, laughing, "that a lady must be careful, before marriage, how she says, 'my dear,' and uses other soft words. She will be careful not to satiate or disgust her favored lover. Gentlemen use their sweet words before marriage; ladies must use their sweet words after marriage."

"You are right — always right, dear Flora," he responded, gayly. "I am glad, however, that you said it once. That will do for a few weeks. I feel assured that the sweet words will come at the proper time."

"Well, you are practicing the gentlemen's rule — flattering before marriage," Flora said, growing serious as she proceeded with her remarks. "But deeds are always better than words. Deeds, especially when performed through a series of months and years, expose the heart — show just what men and women are; but words — what are lighter, more unmeaning and delusive? Mr. Branley, you have spoken many fine words, but I am going to judge you by your deeds; and I expect that you will, sooner or later, judge me very much in the same way."

Mr. Branley and Miss Calvert took another walk. The sick girl leaned again on her lover's arm, although a support was not, perhaps, so necessary as it had been on the previous occasion. They walked through the parlor, opened the front door, stepped out into the portico, and

stood awhile, looking over the fields, and surveying the distant forest. As they returned into the house, the young man addressed these words to the old lady :

"If we had pleasant weather, we should take a walk in the fields. A walk abroad, aided by good company, sunshine and pure air, would restore the roses to Flora's cheeks. But, Mrs. Calvert, you see that she is improving rapidly. To-morrow or next day she will be able to make pies. Next week, or the week after, she will be ready for house-cleaning. And, in the course of a month or two, she will be able to manage a house of her own."

"We are under obligations to you, Mr. Branley," the old lady remarked.

"I am working very hard," he said. "But I am very selfish : I expect a great compensation."

Mrs. Calvert smiled, and appeared to be well satisfied with the state of affairs. Flora and her companion returned to the chamber which they had left.

Little Anna Temple came to see her grandmother and her sick aunt. She looked around with sharp eyes, as children are apt to do. She spied Flora reclining on her couch and Branley holding her hand. The little girl ran to her grandmother, crying out,

"Why, grandma, Mr. Branley is doctor now. I saw him feel aunty's pulse ; and his medicine must be good, for she looks so pleased."

In the afternoon Mr. Branley sent a note to Charles Calvert, whom he had failed to see. It was very short, comprising just these two sentences : "Flora's heartache is gone. You must come to the wedding." Charles, it may be presumed, understood the note perfectly, and was delighted with the news which it conveyed.

Next morning, Mr. Branley, leaving Flora "convalescent," as doctors say, and promising to be back at the end of a fortnight, started for his home.

When the young man had just disappeared at a turn in the road, Dr. Marsden arrived at Mrs. Calvert's on a professional visit. He walked into Flora's chamber, sat down, and felt the sick girl's pulse.

"Why, Miss Flora," the doctor exclaimed, with a professional air, "you are better, very much better. My medicine has operated like a charm. Your pulse is regular, full and soft, indicating a rapid restoration to health. You will soon be perfectly well, Miss Flora."

The doctor was partly right and partly wrong. He was right when he said that Flora was better and would soon be well. But he was quite wrong when he said that his medicine had produced the happy change. He was wrong, because Flora had not taken his medicine. He was wrong, because, in fact, another doctor, one John Branley, had visited the patient, and had administered medicines of a very different kind, with decided and surprising effect. Flora did not enlighten the old doctor, and he left ignorant of the fact that Branley's visit, gayety, cheery talk, and overflowing sympathy and love, constituted the balm, the elixir, the panacea, that had worked like a charm, curing the sick girl so effectually and so quickly.

Rumors floated through the community. They varied from day to day, and sometimes were quite contradictory. According to one rumor, Flora Calvert was very low and could not recover. According to another rumor, she was well, or nearly so, and about to be married. Only a few persons had any real knowledge of facts.

Mrs. Hall, who lived near the Calverts, went to Evansburgh one day. Mrs. Mosman stopped her on the street, and inquired for the news. The two women had an earnest conversation, Mrs. Hall using her Irish dialect, and Mrs. Mosman using her mixed German and English.

"We hear all kinds of stories about Flora Calvert,"

Mrs. Mosman remarked. "Some people say she is going to die. Others say she is going to be married. What is the truth, Mrs. Hall? We were all sorry when we heard that Flora was sick. We would all rejoice to hear that Flora is well, or getting well, and soon to be married. We all love Flora Calvert."

"Why, Flora is almost well," said Mrs. Hall. "I saw her yesterday; and she says she is getting better rapidly. She looks fresh and pretty; in fact, one could hardly believe that she had been sick at all. As to her marriage, I can say nothing positive. Our Jim, passing along the road by Mrs. Calvert's the other morning, saw Mr. Branley mount his horse and ride away. That is a sign of something — is it not?"

"O yes, that is a sign," exclaimed the other woman. "Mr. Branley is not coming so far for nothing. There will be a wedding. And I am glad. I always knew that Branley and Flora would be married. It was fore-ordained. If matches are ever made in heaven, I am sure that a match between Mr. John Branley and Miss Flora Calvert was made up there; they are so much alike, and have been, and must be yet, so fond of each other."

"If they marry," Mrs. Hall remarked, "every person will be glad, and be ready to wish them much happiness. For my part, I think they would do well in all respects."

"I will go surety for Mr. Branley," Susy Mosman said, raising her voice. "I saw him so much in the time of his schools, and he was always so gentlemanly and nice, speaking so kindly to little children and so politely to old people. I never passed him on the street without seeing a bow and hearing a pleasant word. And then, Mrs. Hall, what a noble, brave fellow he is! These eyes saw him rush into the terrible danger to save poor Lambrun."

"I will go surety for Flora," Mrs. Hall remarked, speaking warmly and emphatically. This good friend

resolved that Flora's character should suffer no eclipse, — that her bright qualities should not be cast into the shade by the qualities of another, however bright they might be. "I tell you, Mrs. Mosman, that Flora Calvert showed more courage than John Branley ever did. When human life is suddenly exposed to danger, any one may be brave for a moment. When the danger is fully seen, and when there is plenty of time for reflection, and one deliberately meets the danger, there is real courage. When that horrid disease was in the neighborhood, and so many were taking it and dying, Flora Calvert deliberately walked into our houses and staid with us, nursing the sick, and exposing herself to almost certain death. Her courage, I say, was wonderful; but the Lord was pleased to preserve her life."

"Both are brave, both are good," old Susy Mosman remarked, with much feeling. "May the good Lord bring them together, and give them a happy journey through life!"

Mrs. Hall left the village and walked toward home. She met Tom McConnell, who had been one of Flora Calvert's early lovers. "No" had come from Flora so kindly and pleasantly that Tom continued to be her warm friend.

"We hear," said Tom, "that our old teacher is back. He has learned, I suppose, that Flora is sick, and has come to cure her. I hope he will be successful."

Jane Folsom, once the pretty blonde and lively girl, now Mrs. Durham, came tripping along the road. Approaching Mrs. Hall, she began at once to talk about Flora Calvert and her visitor. Jane, though now a wife and a mother, was still fond of a joke.

"We girls," she said, "were always mad at Flora. She would neither marry Mr. Branley herself or let one of us get him."

"Were you really mad?" Mrs. Hall inquired.

"Yes; but we were mad on Mr. Branley's account as well as on our own. Flora gave him a sore heart, and could easily have cured it; but she would not, or did not. She is now suffering for her cruelty. But perhaps she is going to make amends; and if she does so, I hope she will get well. As for myself, I forgave Flora when Mr. Durham came along and asked me to be his wife."

Mrs. Hall concluded to leave the highway and speak to Mrs. Purdy, the woman whom Flora Calvert had nursed so tenderly and so long.

"O, Mrs. Hall," remarked Mrs. Purdy, with deep emotion, "I was so sorry to hear of Flora's illness. She is the best girl in the world. I owe my life to her tenderness and care. But she is getting better, — is she not?"

"O, yes," replied the other, "she is well, or nearly so. I saw her yesterday, and I saw no illness. She is bright and happy."

"God be thanked!" exclaimed Mrs. Purdy, fervently. "But is Flora going to marry Mr. Branley, that nice, good young man?"

"I rather think so," Mrs. Hall replied.

"O, I am glad," said Mrs. Purdy. "Flora deserves all that the world can give. May she have a loving husband and a sweet life! With all my heart I wish her joy."

Thus the people showed their interest in Flora Calvert's welfare, and indulged in speculation and conjecture. Mrs. Hall knew something about Flora and her affairs and stated what she knew. Tom McConnell approached the truth pretty closely in regard to one interesting matter. The people soon learned everything, and many were very glad to hear of Flora's recovered health and bright matrimonial prospects.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HAPPY DAYS.

MR. BRANLEY returned at the appointed time. He was delighted with what he saw and heard. Flora was in fine health ; she was even rosy ; and she was as lively, gay, and musical as any bird in spring. Branley and Flora met as affianced lovers. Besides enjoying each other's company, they had only one thing to do, viz., to make arrangements for their wedding. They chose for the time of their nuptials a day in June when the roses would be in bloom ; and they decided all questions relating to guests, the clergyman who should officiate, and the dinner. Having settled everything pertaining to their marriage, they turned, with all their hearts, to the other business — enjoyment of themselves. They talked and laughed, read poems and stories, sung hymns and songs, sauntered abroad, pressed each other's hand, looked into each other's face, and had, beyond question, the sweetest experience that can be enjoyed on earth. O blessed days ! — the days of love and courtship ! Alas ! there are people who never enjoy them.

During one of their pleasant walks, the lovers came to an open wood. They stood awhile and looked around. Flora, growing weary, leaned heavily on Branley's arm. The small event suggested a great thought.

"Flora, you lean on me now, as you have been doing for some time ; but I expect, in the great journey of life, to lean on you."

"Mr. Branley, you surprise me," Flora remarked. "You requested me, some time ago, to lean on you ; and

you declared, very positively, that you would never grow weary. I thought you were the oak and I was the vine, and all I had to do was to cling to the big, strong tree. Is the oak failing already?"

"Let me explain," said Mr. Branley. "Men and women differ. Men are strong where women are weak, and are weak where women are strong. A husband and wife should be the complement of each other. Considered as one, they should exhibit strength, symmetry and beauty, or something near perfection. Now, permit me to speak of ourselves, and make an application of my theory. You and I differ. People, I am aware, used to say that we were just alike, — alike personally, mentally, morally, every way. I know they gave credit to both of us for the possession of good principles, kind hearts and unflinching courage. But they were partly wrong. We differ — differ widely. I am excitable, impulsive, sometimes wild, almost insane. Don't you remember the excursion on the lake and the debate in the school-house? Now, you are always calm and steady; you have perfect command of yourself; and you have great practical wisdom. You have, therefore, the qualities which I lack. In the future I shall rest on your calm, solid judgment. I shall be calm, steady, and safe, when I cling to one who is always calm and immovable amidst the storms of life."

The young man spoke with a measure of seriousness. He had intended to state the truth. But he was conscious that he had indulged in some exaggeration. Flora understood him, perceived the facts, detected the exaggerations, and proposed to answer accordingly. Designing to mix serious thought with pleasantry, she remarked,

"A man who is a little wild or insane shows the state of his mind by expressing wild opinions and manifesting absurd expectations. Therefore —" Mr. Branley began to laugh, interrupting her. But she presently added,

"To speak seriously, Mr. Branley, I fear, if you lean on me, you will be sadly disappointed."

"Well, Flora," he said, speaking in a deliberate manner, "I do not suppose that you are perfect, though I have not yet discovered any imperfections. Possibly, I shall discover some in course of time. And, possibly, I shall be able to supply what you lack. I may be supplementary to you, and you may be supplementary to me; and so we shall present, or may present, a sample of perfection to the world."

"I am convinced," Flora remarked, laughing, "that we differ; but I am not sure that we can realize the interesting result of which you speak. However, if we succeed as well as imperfect beings may, I shall be happy. But, Mr. Branley, one of your statements has suggested an inquiry. How do men and women differ? Or, what is the strength and weakness of the sexes respectively? Our case may be peculiar, and so prove nothing. Of course, you understand the subject, and can answer my question satisfactorily."

"You give me quite too much credit, Miss Flora. I know little about men and less about women. Then your question is really a hard one; I cannot answer it satisfactorily."

"You remember what you told us in school. 'Try.'"

"I will try. Now listen, Flora. Men, compared with women, are physically strong. As to mental strength — well, there is the puzzle. It is said that, in the matter of abstract reasoning, men are stronger than women. It is said that men can discern the nature of things better than women, — that they are not so liable as women to be caught and misled by tinsel and outside trappings. It is said that men can resist evil influences better than women. But I cannot affirm that all this has been demonstrated. Indeed," he continued, passing to a lighter strain, "I can

speak more readily of men's weakness than of their strength. Men have a large measure of conceit, and must be flattered in order to be kept in good humor. They are impatient, capricious, often surly, stubborn, and tyrannical, and always selfish and exacting."

"Stop, Mr. Branley; you have said enough — more than I wish to believe about men — much more than I wish to believe about some of them. Give me your ideas about the weakness and strength of women."

"I have no ideas about their weakness. I never saw any weakness in my mother. I have never seen any weakness in you, Flora. The newspapers say that women are fond of dress, notice, flirtation, dancing, gossip, and all light things — besides, must have the last word in a dispute or argument; but I put no faith in the newspapers. The strength of women," he said, leaving the light strain, "is their ready wit, their loving, sympathizing nature, their faith and piety, their fortitude or power of enduring both mental and physical suffering."

"According to the general theory," Flora remarked, "men think, women feel; men deliberate, women act; and both men and women have bad faults. Does the general theory apply to us, Mr. Branley?"

"It does not, Miss Calvert. The fact is, our case is peculiar, as you said it might be. The thought and deliberation are on your side, and the feeling — well, each of us has a share; the faults are on my side."

"But, according to your judgment, the theory is applicable to men and women in general."

"Yes."

"And, according to your judgment, ready wit and a fine emotional nature make women strong."

"Yes."

"Mr. Branley, I once heard a gentleman say that beauty, and nothing else, was the strength of women."

The same gentleman now says that a ready wit and a fine emotional nature make women strong; and he does not speak of beauty at all. Is he consistent?"

"Flora, you must have written down my speech or taken notes. But I do not know whether to feel flattered or annoyed. Did you preserve my speech for occasional reading and study? Or did you preserve it just to catch me and expose my inconsistencies?"

"I did not write down your speech or take notes; but I remember some of it. I refer to your speech now, neither to flatter or annoy you, but to point out a change of position. Don't fear to be inconsistent, Mr. Branley. Don't fear to change your opinions. It is a weakness in men that they hold to their opinions even when seen to be wrong."

"Let me show you, that I am not inconsistent, — that I have not changed my opinions, and have no cause for changing them. When I made my speech in the school-house, more than three years ago, I was a boy, speaking to boys and girls, and talking about boys and girls. Beauty rules boys and girls to-day. Now I am a man, addressing a woman, and speaking about married people, or people who have reached the years of understanding. Most certainly women are strong when they are sensible, kind and good. But, Flora, I do not now deny that beauty is a power in woman. I use the term still, but I use it in a wide sense. I can even affirm, positively, that beauty — that is, the beauty of face, person, manners, mind and heart — makes woman strong, and enables her to govern the world."

"My good friend, your strength lies in your ability to talk ingeniously and plausibly. But I think you have the common weakness of men: you cannot admit your fallibility."

"My good friend, your strength lies in your ability to

detect and expose the inconsistencies, sophistries and foibles of men. But I think you have the common weakness of women: you must have the last word."

"Sir, you are at once a flatterer and a traducer, and so are inconsistent again. And you show most extraordinary weakness, as well as inconsistency, in another way: forgetting your disclaimer, you put all faith in the newspapers."

"Madam, you are too sharp for me. I acknowledge myself vanquished."

"Is that flattery, Mr. Branley?"

"You must know, Flora."

The lovers had a good laugh. Then they resumed their walk, and conversed on different subjects. But Flora's mind reverted strongly to the serious part of their late conversation. A sense of coming responsibility made her profoundly thoughtful and sober. Indeed, a conviction that Mr. Branley expected much from her companionship and counsel, made her feel intensely anxious. As they walked slowly towards home, Flora breathed a silent prayer that she might be fitted for her place in life, and might not disappoint the man who, as she believed, put an almost unbounded trust in her wisdom and goodness.

The conversation, during the late walk, approached a subject which is now frequently discussed, viz., "woman's rights." That subject caused no agitation in the early times. Women did not know, or suspect, or imagine, that they suffered any wrong. Indeed, it cannot now be seen that they had any special grievance. Boys and girls attended the same school, and usually studied the same branches. Sons and daughters, as a rule, inherited equal shares of their father's estate. Boys and girls, men and women, enjoyed nearly equal measures of personal freedom. As a rule, all married when and whom they

pleased. It is true that woman was then recognized as the "weaker vessel." But that recognition secured to her special privileges and immunities. Women had the lighter employments. Daughters received a more tender treatment than sons. Girls often wore nicer and more expensive clothing than was worn by their brothers. The married woman was practically recognized as the "better half." Now and then the wife was seen in silk when the husband was seen in domestic woolen or linen. It is also true that, in family government, woman held a secondary place. The Apostolic doctrine that "the husband is the head of the wife" was very generally received. But women cheerfully acquiesced in what they regarded as a divine arrangement. Contentions between husbands and wives were uncommon. Divorce was almost unknown. Does the present time show an improvement? Does the future promise something still better?

Agitation will proceed; but some things should be regarded as settled forever. Woman must not be the fierce antagonist of man. She must not be a leader of senates and armies. She must not stand on the rostrum and attempt to sway the multitude by passionate declamation. She must not seek a training or pursue a career that would destroy, or seriously impair, her loveliness and refining power. At the same time, she must not be tended and fondled as an infant or worshiped as a goddess. She must be man's rational companion, his helpmeet and his comforter. It must be forever true that woman attains her best estate when she becomes a happy wife and the "joyful mother of children."

Mr. Branley staid several days. He and Flora, now and then, called at a neighbor's, gave a pleasant surprise and spent a pleasant hour. They visited Charles Calvert and his wife in their new home, and spent one of their happiest days. As they were leaving, Charles said to Mr. Branley, privately,

"You are working successfully, and so is Flora."

"A thousand thanks to you," Branley said, warmly, "for giving me, and giving her, an opportunity to work."

When Mr. Branley was about to leave for home, he submitted a question to his betrothed, introducing it, however, by some preliminary remarks.

"Flora," he said, "our wedding-day is more than six weeks from this time. Six weeks appear a long time to me just now. Then the whole of beautiful May comes between this time and our wedding. People tell that the days of courtship — days in which love is present and care is absent — are the happiest days which men and women enjoy. I trust that all of our days will be happy, — happy as they can be in the present life; but I am sure that these days — the days of our courtship — are intensely sweet. Let us enjoy them to the utmost. Suffer me, then, to come back next month, stay a few days, and enjoy with you the freshness and beauty of revived nature. All beauty is heightened, bright hours are made brighter, pleasure is increased twofold — perhaps sevenfold — by the presence of those we love. And, Flora, let me find you fresh and rosy, and fitted, in all respects, to be the queen of May. What do you say, my good girl?"

"Your will is my will," she replied. "Certainly I would be pleased to see you next month and enjoy with you the freshness and beauty of spring. As to being a May-queen, or a queen of any sort, I say this, — my highest ambition is to be queen of Mr. Branley's heart."

"Oh, you are that now and ever will be," rejoined the enthusiastic young man.

The lovers parted as lovers are accustomed to part. Flora Calvert was alone once more; but she had no sense of loneliness, — in fact, was exceedingly cheerful and happy. She had dreams in her wakeful hours, and dreams in her sleep: all were pleasant. She was very

busy now, preparing for her wedding and for house-keeping. At the same time, Mr. Branley was, beyond question, the busiest man in his neighborhood. He remodeled and enlarged his house. He made a fresh application of paint. He purchased new, pretty furniture. Remembering a wish that Flora once expressed, he ordered some books and pictures from a distant city. He made large additions to his shrubbery. He exercised his utmost skill as a florist and gardener, and even made some attempts as a landscape artist. In a word, Mr. Branley made a great and persistent effort to prepare a suitable home for his Flora.

CHAPTER XXVII.

STUDY AND LITERARY WORK.

WHEN the twelfth day of May arrived, Flora Calvert began to show some excitement. Indeed, at an early hour in the afternoon, she forgot or neglected her work entirely. She stood before the glass, smoothed her hair, adjusted her collar, and attached some fresh flowers to her dress. She frequently walked to a window and looked out. Sometimes she stood in the front door, and glanced along the highway. Once or twice she walked to the front gate, placed her hands on the paling, and gazed intently, for a minute or two, in a certain direction. Her face became surprisingly flushed, and she was even seized with an ungovernable tremor. What was the matter? At three o'clock, Flora, while walking in the front yard, espied a gentleman on horseback, approaching in a lively manner. She ran into the house, ran up stairs, looked out of a window, ran down stairs, ran to the door at the

proper time, and met Mr. Branley on the steps of the portico. They met as lovers are accustomed to meet.

Mr. Branley and his betrothed had walks and talks almost without number, and certainly enjoyed, in all their fullness and intensity, the pleasures afforded by youth, innocence, love, companionship and prospective marriage. The beautiful weather and the beautiful world often allured them from the house. They went forth every day and looked at Nature. They gathered pebbles, mosses, ferns, and a great variety of wild flowers. The scientific knowledge which Mr. Branley had acquired during the three years of solitary life, was employed in a way of which he had never dreamed. The young man actually assumed, once more, the position and duties of a teacher. He had only one pupil, but one was enough. So he gave instruction to Flora in botany, mineralogy, and other branches of natural science. The teacher was delighted with his labors; and the pupil was delighted with her studies.

"Mr. Branley," remarked Flora one day, smiling, "you gave me the hard studies first — grammar and arithmetic. These are quite easy and pleasant."

"Flora," remarked the teacher, laughing, "you gave me the hard life first. My life is now quite pleasant and satisfactory."

One day, as the lovers were passing a cluster of lilac bushes, they espied a humming-bird. They stood and watched its motions, as it darted from blossom to blossom, extracting the delicate sweets. They also noticed the rich colors of the winged, flashing gem.

"What a beautiful little thing!" Flora exclaimed. Then, after a little reflection, she added, "Mr. Branley, you are a poet, and there is a subject for you. Write a poem on the humming-bird."

"I am no poet, Flora."

"You are, and I can prove it. I have the proof in my drawer. Did you not write a poem entitled, *To Flora?* Address something to the humming-bird, Mr. Poet."

"O, dear Flora, Cupid, not the Muses, inspired me when I wrote to you in verse. I loved you, and, therefore, could not do otherwise than write. Now, while I admire this pretty little thing, I do not love it. How can I write verses to the humming-bird?"

"Let your admiration inspire you. Try." Observing that Mr. Branley shook his head, Flora added, "My dear, will you not comply with my *first request?*"

"O, my girl, I see that you know how to coax and gain a point. You know when to use sweet words. You know exactly when to say, 'My dear.' I believe if we were not exposed to public view, you would put your arm around my neck, and—and—make resistance impossible." All of this was said in the lightest and gayest manner. Mr. Branley continued: "But, Flora, I will comply with your request on a certain condition. Do you hear that turtle-dove?"

"Yes, I hear it. I always like to listen to the cooing of a dove. It is the softest and tenderest music in nature; but it is mournful, and makes me sad. People say that the dove has been mourning ever since the flood, when it was separated from its mate and compelled to fly over the boundless waters. Whenever I hear that mournful sound, I think of Noah's dove, flying over the dreary waters, all alone, hungry and weary, and cooing, even on the wing,—cooing piteously, as if mourning for its mate."

"Well, the dove is more worthy of poetic eulogy than the humming-bird. The dove is a model of conjugal affection and fidelity. Besides, it is an emblem of divine power. Now, my bright lady, I agree to address something to the humming-bird, on the condition that you write a poem about the dove."

"I cannot write poetry, Mr. Branley. I never wrote a poem in my life. I once attempted to write a verse, and wrote two lines without much difficulty; but the third and fourth lines refused to rhyme with the first and second; and I gave up the task. Why don't you ask me to tell a story? I could do that, and might gain a prize if I competed with you; but to write a poem is quite beyond my abilities."

"You do not know what you can do, Flora. Take the advice which you have given me. Try. If you have failed once, try again. Rhyming, with a little practice, becomes easy. To put sense in the lines is the troublesome matter. To confess a secret, I am somewhat anxious to test your intellectual powers. You talk well; how can you write? Those finely sculptured and delicate features; those great, lustrous, wonderful eyes, with depths which I have not yet been able to fathom; those varied, nameless, indescribable lights and shadows flitting over your face, promise much — profound thoughts, noble conceptions, brilliant fancies, and the sweetest, as well as the most refined, expression of the tender emotions. I am anxious so see whether there is an intellectual and spiritual nature corresponding with these fine indications."

"Well, Mr. Branley, I will try. But you will hardly see what I write. I am not bound to expose myself just for your gratification."

Miss Calvert abandoned her household duties, retired to her chamber, and devoted her time and energy to literary work. Mr. Branley retired to the woods and invoked the proper muse. The poets thought and wrote during a considerable part of the day. Even during the following night some thinking and writing were done.

Mr. Branley's visit was about to end. His horse stood at the gate, prancing impatiently. The lovers — poets for the time — walked in the front yard among the lilacs

and other flowering shrubs. Each of them held a folded paper.

"Flora," said Mr. Branley, "I am prepared to read my poem. Are you prepared to read yours?"

"O Mr. Branley," she replied, with some appearance of affright and embarrassment, "I have written something; but you are a critic, and I am afraid to read it."

"Dear Flora," he said, tenderly, "I am no critic at all. Besides, I am sure that your poetry, whatever it is, will be very beautiful, sweet and precious to me. Yesterday, I spoke lightly and foolishly. I have been satisfied, during four long years, that you had intellect enough for anything; and, consequently, I do not wish to test your powers in a new way. I simply wish to secure, in poetic form, a memorial of these happy days."

Flora consented to read her poem. But she earnestly requested Mr. Branley to take the lead in the literary performance. Conforming to her wish, the poet-lover unfolded his paper and read as follows:—

TO THE HUMMING-BIRD.

O, wondrous bird, a moment wait!
Why dart away from me?
I would not, could not, meditate
An injury to thee:
Graced, as thou art, with every charm,
No one could ever wish thee harm.

Surprised — O, yes, enrapt — I view
A rainbow on thy plumes,—
Hues richer than the richest hue
Of gems, or buds, or blooms,—
Hues glancing on my dazzled sight
As if a stream of rosy light.

Planned, formed, and painted, in the skies,
With beauteous Eve to dwell,
Thou wast the Bird of Paradise
Till she, deluded, fell:
Alas! now flown away from home.
In this chill, dreary world to roam!

Still joyously thy life is spent,
Though far from Eden's bowers;
Still thou art bright and innocent,
And still among the flowers;
Still finding nectar, as of old,
In cups of amethyst and gold.

O, could I meet a friend or fair,
In all the flush of youth,
Who might, indeed, with thee compare
In purity and truth!
No ills of earth would be deplored,
With Eden more than half restored.

O, when I walk in yonder grove,
Where snow-white locusts blow,
Or through the fragrant meadow rove,
Where floral beauties grow,
Be my companion! let us range
A world of sunshine, bloom, and change.

Old Earth is bright with morning's beams,
And new-born charms arise;
The distant, radiant prospect seems
Another Paradise:
O, yes, an Eden, young and gay,
Allures my little friend away.

Dart, then, to yonder sunny vale,
On silken, flashing wings:
There blooming lilac scents the gale,
And honeysuckle springs;
There every blossom woos a kiss;
There is thy home, thy world of bliss.

There, midst the sparkling dew-drops, taste
The sweets of every flower;
From scene to scene, enraptured, haste —
From lawn to copse or bower;
And thus enjoy, from morn till night,
A Paradise of fresh delight.

Mr. Branley finished his task and looked at Flora. Her eyes met his. She had evidently listened with the keenest interest. And she remarked, hastily,

"Mr. Poet, your poem expresses more than admiration.

You love the humming-bird. You want it to be your companion through the bright, flowery world. Or you wish to meet a lady just like the bird — fair, innocent and sweet — whom you may love and make your companion. I feel a little jealousy and alarm, Mr. Branley.”

“O, my sweet girl,” the poet-lover said, putting his arm around Flora, and looking into her face, “I have met the fair one, and Eden is already more than half restored. Now, Flora, read your poem.”

With trembling hands the new poet unfolded her paper ; and, making a great effort to control her voice, she read as follows : —

THE DOVE.

O, pity for the dove
That flies o'er waters vast and dreary, —
Finds nothing good and nothing cheery, —
Turns to the ark with cots above !
Kind Noah, pity one so weary ;
Take in thy little dove.

O, pity for the dove !
No land, no tree, no mate, perceiving,
No gentle notes her heart relieving, —
Turns to the ark for home and love !
O, pity one thus lorn and grieving ;
Take in thy little dove.

O, pity for the dove !
Far o'er the waters flying, flying,
No fruits, no seeds, no buds, espying, —
Turns to the ark with stores above !
O, pity one thus starved and dying ;
Take in thy little dove.

O, pity for the dove !
Thus lonely, wearied, famished, ailing,
Her cooing like a soft, faint wailing, —
Turns to the window seen above !
O, pity her whose wings are failing ;
Take in thy little dove.

I am a little dove !

And, wafted o'er a wide, wide ocean,
The elements in fierce commotion,
I look to One enthroned above :
Thine, Saviour, is my heart's devotion ;
Give shelter to thy dove.

I am a little dove

That flies o'er waters vast and dreary, —
Finds nothing good and nothing cheery,
And looks to Heaven for home and love :
O, pity one thus lone and weary ;
Take in thy little dove.

While reading the last two stanzas, Flora was almost overcome with emotion. At the close of the reading, Mr. Branley found himself incapable of either speech or action. Presently, with a choked utterance, he said,

"Flora, long, long ago, you sought and found the ark."

Both were silent for a few moments. But Branley, observing the girl's continued agitation, and recovering his powers, exclaimed, with enthusiasm,

"O, my sweet dove, fly to me, nestle in my bosom, and mourn no more !"

Of course, she was taken into his arms and pressed to his heart. They parted, — parted, however, to meet again. Branley mounted his horse and rode away. Flora walked slowly into the house.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONSUMMATION.

ON a certain day in June there was a great bustle at Mrs. Calvert's. A large company of friends and neighbors had assembled. Charles Calvert and his wife, Mrs. Hall, Mrs. Patton, and others, sat in the parlor. A

number stood in the portico, chatting merrily. A larger number walked about in the front yard, looking at the flowers, and enjoying the fresh, beautiful morning. At ten o'clock Mr. John Branley arrived. The horses which he drove, but, especially, the carriage in which he rode, attracted notice and caused remarks. Of course, Mr. Branley received a hearty welcome. Charles Calvert grasped his hand, remarking, privately,

"My dear sir, you have succeeded; Flora is cured completely. She never looked so well as she does now. She was never so happy as she has been during the last few weeks. I trust your pay is satisfactory."

"My pay is above estimation," Mr. Branley said, warmly.

"Well," Charles observed, "I suppose that Flora has really given an equivalent; she has cured you."

At thirty minutes past ten, Mr. John Branley walked into Miss Flora Calvert's chamber, and saw Miss Flora in bridal array. She was dressed with admirable taste, but wore no jewels, not even a ring. He paused a moment to enjoy a fair view of his bride. They saluted each other properly. Mr. Branley, sitting down beside Flora, took a folded paper from his pocket. The paper contained some verses. In the sweetest and most winning tone that he could use, he read one aloud, making, however, a slight alteration to suit a change of circumstances. It was this:

See! many, many guests appear
To grace our bridal day;
And now the holy man is here—
Sweet Flora, come away.

He took her hand and said, with a smile playing over his face,

"Four years ago, I cried, 'Sweet Flora, come away;' but you did not heed me. What do you say now?"

With smiles and blushes, and beautiful confusion, she replied, most promptly and sweetly,

"I go, I go, Mr. Branley."

He then led her into the large parlor, and, in a short time, Miss Flora Calvert became Mrs. Branley. Congratulations followed in profusion. The guests knew or suspected that both bridegroom and bride had experienced trouble, and were glad to see that their trouble had passed away and great happiness had come.

Mrs. Calvert and her aids employed their best skill in the culinary art. A great dinner was served; all partook; and all were merry.

Early in the afternoon, Mr. Branley led his bride into the garden, conducted her to the enclosure formed by the rose-bushes, and placed her in the center. She stood in her snow-white bridal array, with some delicate flowers in her hair and a superb rose attached to her dress, while ten thousand roses bloomed around her. Mr. Branley looked at the roses, and he looked at Flora. Then he repeated these two lines of the poem which he carried in his pocket:

Among the roses thou wilt stand,
Most beautiful of all.

And then he clasped her in his arms and kissed her. The thought which had possessed him four years previously, when he stood on the outside of the garden, and looked at the sweet girl among the flowers, became fruition. The bridegroom and bride returned to the house.

Mr. Branley's carriage was driven to the front gate. And Flora, having made some change in her dress and put on her bonnet, appeared at the front door. The guests were surprised, one inquiring, "What does that mean?" and another exclaiming, "Surely, Mr. Branley, you do not intend to leave us to-day." Branley stated that he

and Flora proposed to make a little excursion ; but would soon return.

Mr. Branley and his bride entered the carriage and rode to Evansburgh. They made several hasty calls, and received hearty congratulations. Then, leaving the carriage at a public house, they took a walk. Whither did they go? What object had they in view? They followed a path which led them among the clusters of elder bushes. They entered a small open area. They found a log, sat down, and glanced at the water and the distant shore. They saw no great, white birds sweeping and circling grandly in the upper air, or floating majestically on the water ; they saw nothing that was singular ; they did not even expect to see anything that would be specially interesting in itself ; yet they were thinking about gulls, and swans, and angels, and the "better country," and other things, — that is, the sights, the talk, the experience, of a day long past.

"Do you know where you are, Flora?" Mr. Branley inquired.

"Yes, I know," she replied. "I have seen this place many times. I sat on this log years ago."

"Well, some events, and, consequently, some places, cannot be forgotten," Mr. Branley observed. "Here, four years and eight months ago, I first saw my ideal girl — the girl about whom I had dreamed for years — the very girl I wished to find. Here, three years and two or three months ago, we sat together. I seized and held your hand, but I could not get your heart. Now I have both. This log is rotting, but our lives are budding, blossoming, bearing golden fruit. We have a great triumph, a sublime joy, to-day."

"That is high-flown language," Flora remarked, smiling. "Use common language, Mr. Branley, and I shall be able to understand you."

"Common language will not answer my purpose," he said, with fervor. "I wish to describe a great and wonderful change in our lives. We have entered upon a new existence. Let us sing, Flora; let us make all the shores of Konneautt Lake resound with a song of triumph and joy."

"Mr. Branley," said Flora, with suppressed merriment, "you are married now and should not indulge in extravagance. Married people should be sober, or, at least, sensible."

"Flora," cried the enthusiast, "I claim to be just now both sober and sensible. Have we not cause for triumph and joy? Have we not conquered adverse, stubborn fate? Have we not obtained a complete victory over misfortune and sorrow? Have we not won the pure joys of love and wedded life? I have no trouble to-day. And you have none, Flora. I see no tears, hear no sobs, witness no speechless anguish."

"I have no trouble to-day, Mr. Branley," she said, turning to him with a beaming face.

"So I believe," he remarked, taking her into his arms. "Flora," continued Mr. Branley, in tones that seemed partly serious and partly playful, "you do not now want the swans to come and carry you away?"

"No," she responded, with one of her most charming smiles. "No, unless they agree to take two passengers."

"You are a true girl, — a true wife I should say now. We must not be parted."

Mr. Branley was silent for a short time. Then, passing to a more serious mood, he remarked,

"The swans can do nothing for us; but the angels will do something. The angels will come and carry us to the 'better country.'"

"Mr. Branley, we shall probably have something to do, and something to bear, before the angels come," said the newly-married woman.

"Yes, Flora, but the angels will come at last. How much I wish they would come for us at the same moment, and carry us away together!"

"My dear husband," said Flora, touched with the expression of his loving and tender but unavailing wish, "you think of what is not likely to happen, and what is really of no consequence. Do not trouble yourself about a momentary separation."

"My dear wife, you are a wise woman. I am glad that I have secured so good a counselor."

"You need a better counselor than I am, Mr. Branley."

"O, I must not forget the Divine Counselor!" he said, with much emotion. "I will trust in you and in Providence."

"I have promised to help you every way, and I mean to do it," she said, in tones which expressed both tender feelings and a resolute mind.

"Thank you! thank you, my good Flora!" Mr. Branley exclaimed, with a bounding heart. "Let us, trusting in the Great Counselor, do our work and do it well; and when the Master, choosing his own time and way, sends his angels, we shall be ready to go. Flora, let us return."

They rose, took their final look at Konneautt Lake, and walked back towards the village. They did not talk much; but their minds were busy and their hearts were full. They reflected about a former walk on the same path. They contrasted that sorrowful walk with the present joyous one. They contrasted the sad hour when they parted, believing fully that they would never meet again, with the passing hour when they were united by love and holy wedlock, and expected to part no more.

Mr. Branley and his lady reached the village, entered the carriage, returned to Mrs. Calvert's, and spent the remaining part of the day in the society of their guests and friends.

During an hour or two the old ladies sat by themselves and had some quiet and sober conversation.

"I like this wedding," Mrs. Hall remarked. "Mr. Branley and Flora are so nicely mated. They suit each other in respect to age, education, habits, and manner of life. And then there is a strong attachment between them."

"They will be a happy pair," said Mrs. Patton.

"In early girlhood," Mrs. Calvert observed, "Flora was inclined to indulge in dreams and fancies. But dreams and fancies — at least, many of them — dissolved and vanished long ago. She now looks upon life and the world just as they are, and is prepared, I think, for whatever may come. Both Mr. Branley and Flora are thoughtful and prudent. They have not been spoiled by reading novels. They do not look for perfection in each other. They do not anticipate perfect happiness in the present life. They know that more or less toil, bereavement and sorrow are before them. But they read the Holy Bible; they trust in the great heavenly Father; they have the same purposes and hopes; and they will have the support and comfort of mutual sympathy, care and active help. I believe that Flora and her husband will be as happy as people can be in this world; and I am sure that they will be useful."

"We shall miss Flora very much," Mrs. Hall remarked. "Poor Mrs. Purdy weeps every time she thinks about Flora's departure."

"I shall miss her more than any one can," said Mrs. Calvert, struggling to repress her emotions. "Flora and I have been special companions and friends for many years. I have learned to rely on her judgment and to look to her for sympathy and comfort. But, no doubt, she will be missed by the whole community. However, Mr. Branley assures us that Flora will be heartily wel-

comed by his friends and neighbors. And as more or less suffering and sorrow exist everywhere, she will have frequent opportunities to show sympathy and kindness and pursue her Christian work. If we lose, others will gain."

This wedding-day was a departure from custom. The guests retired in the evening. And it was followed by no "infair."

Next day, at nine o'clock, Mr. Branley brought out his carriage again. Flora, dressed for a journey, stood at the front gate. Friends and neighbors clustered around her. The little folks caught her hands and her clothes, and said, with united and earnest voices,

"Aunty, dear aunty, you must come back again."

"Yes, my pets, I will come back," she answered, with smiles and tears, giving each one a parting kiss.

Mrs. Calvert stepped forward and addressed her new son.

"Mr. Branley, do you hear what Flora says? She promises to come back soon."

"Yes, mother, I hear," he replied. "Flora's will is my will. We shall return in two weeks. We have determined to make much of our honey-moon. We must visit our good friends at Konneautt Lake. We must have another excursion on the water, and perhaps will catch a fish. We must certainly visit Mount Hope, which we once thought was 'Paradise regained.'" Then, in lower and gentler tones, he added, "Mother, wherever Flora is there is my paradise now."

Flora overheard the flattering words, and, trying to use a little pleasantry — perhaps to hide her agitation — remarked, her mother and her husband being the listeners,

"Why, Mr. Branley talks like a lover."

"I am a lover," he said, with emphasis, "and I trust ever will be."

Another trial of the feelings awaited the *bride*. She heard the patter of little feet, and, looking up the road, she saw three little ones approaching at their best speed. She knew them at a glance. They were Mrs. Purdy's children, — Bessy, Mary and Tommy. Bessy held Tommy's hand, and endeavored to help him forward. Flora passed through the gate, and met the children with a smile — perhaps also with a tear. Tommy stepped forward and tried to speak, as if by appointment, calling her aunty, as these children had constantly done after their mother's illness.

"Aunty," said the little stammering boy, "my mamma says when you come back you must come and see us, and —"

The little fellow stopped, — perhaps for want of breath, — perhaps he had forgotten the other part of the message. Mary supplied the missing part, adding,

"And you must fetch Mr. Branley with you."

"I will do all that," Flora said, kindly, and even tenderly. She took Tommy into her arms and kissed him, and then kissed the girls.

Bessy had something to communicate.

"My mother wants me to say for her, Good-by, dear Flora."

Flora was deeply touched, and was just able to say,

"Bessy, say to your mother for me, Good-by, dear Mrs. Purdy."

Mrs. Calvert and Mr. Branley stood near, watching and listening with great interest. But the time for separation had come, and Flora bid adieu to her friends. Mr. Branley, turning to his bride, asked, playfully,

"*Sweet wife*, are you ready to go?"

Flora heard, and, moved by the same playful spirit, instantly replied,

"Yes, *dear husband*, I am ready."

Mr. Branley placed his bride in the carriage, and then placed himself at her side. The horses, hearing the customary word, bounded away. Flora looked back, smiled, waved her handkerchief, and shed some tears. Friends and neighbors, as well as Mrs. Calvert, had an experience of mingled sorrow and gladness. All were sorry to see the dear friend go away ; but all were glad that Mr. Branley had got his beloved Flora ; and all were glad that Flora Calvert had married so excellent a man.

ought to write another book and then die

THE END.

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
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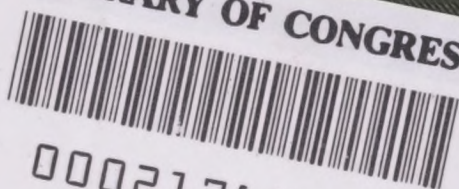
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